“THERE’S A LOT MORE CULTURE IN MY LIFE THAN I THOUGHT”:

STUDYING FOLKLORE

AS PART OF AN UNDERGRADUATE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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To

Marguerite J. Adams

Elcie "Joe" and Charlene Curtis Adams

My parents, elders, and mutual fan club

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Krystie Lynn Herndon

"THERE'S A LOT MORE CULTURE IN MY LIFE THAN I THOUGHT": STUDYING FOLKLORE AS PART OF AN UNDERGRADUATE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Helping students to gain knowledge and understanding of human cultures, and how these cultures shape individuals and communities, comprises an enduring learning objective in the general education of college students. The study of folklore, as an example of cultural studies disciplines, has been offered to undergraduate students at several hundred American colleges and universities. However, little research has been done to ascertain whether undergraduate students actually gain such learning outcomes from folklore classes. Using constructivist narrative inquiry methodology, the chief purpose of this study was to provide undergraduate students with an opportunity to reflect upon and to articulate their perceptions of cultural knowledge and understanding gained from folklore general education classes.

Qualitative research methods were used to provide triangulation of three sources of data: document analysis of syllabi from six fall 2019 folklore general education classes; notes from attendance at one lecture of each of the six classes; and transcripts of interviews with 22 undergraduate students who had completed their first folklore general education classes. Students' reflections were investigated to ascertain how students perceived their folklore general education class experience as contributing to their knowledge of themselves, their own cultures, and cultures different from their own, and as contributing knowledge useful to their daily lives and future career paths. The study's conceptual framework of intercultural maturity development

(King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015) undergirded examination of how the students' folklore general education experience might contribute to their intercultural maturity and growth.

Student participants were able to articulate cultural knowledge that they had retained from their folklore general education classes: knowledge and understanding about themselves and their own cultures; knowledge and awareness of cultures different from their own; and application of their newly gained cultural knowledge to their daily lives and career goals. Student reflections tended to echo both the content and learning objectives of course syllabi and lecture notes. However, interpretation of these findings indicated that noting movement towards intercultural maturity in undergraduate students would require more longitudinal study of students' cultural learning experiences. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1: FOLKLORE STUDY AS A CASE OF CULTURAL LEARNING

Background of Study

Delbanco (2012) defines education, particularly the kind of educational experience college undergraduate students should have, as "growing out of an embattled sense of self into a more generous view of life as continuous self-reflection in light of a new experience, including the witnessed experience of others" (p. 47). Helping students to gain knowledge and understanding of human cultures, and how those cultures shape individuals and communities, comprises an enduring learning objective in the general education of college students (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2007; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [CFAT], 1977; Indiana University [IU], 2009; Rudolph, 1977). I argue that educators should consider not only which academic disciplines bear the objectives of teaching students the knowledge and skills of understanding themselves and others, but also whether students actually acquire the cultural knowledge offered through those academic disciplines.

One academic discipline, folklore, has been offered to undergraduate students since 1942 (IU Folklore Institute, *n.d.*), as a subject through which instructors have aspired for their students to learn "to recognize and analyze their own traditions" (Fish, 1984, p. 47), and to "experience…other cultures more deeply" (Stekert, 1984, p. 62). Folklore, the study of social groups and their creative and artistic expression in everyday life, was purported to be first offered at IU Bloomington (IUB) in 1942 (IU Folklore Institute, *n.d.*) and now appears in undergraduate general education programs in over 400 North American colleges and universities (Baker, 1986). Despite the decades of folklore instruction in American colleges and universities, few studies exist to ascertain whether the study of folklore contributes to undergraduate students'

knowledge of self and others, as part of an undergraduate general education curriculum. This lack of scholarship presents a gap, that I hope to help fill in this present study.

While American educators, statesmen, students, and citizens have spent centuries grappling with what constitutes the most important and useful curriculum to prepare American college students for the present and the future (DuBois, 1903/1986; Geiger, 2015; Lucas, 2006; Rudolph, 1977; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2004), helping students develop knowledge of self and of others remains a key objective of "a common, basic undergraduate learning experience" (CFAT, 1977, p. 121). In the globally and technologically connected world of the 21st century, higher education stakeholders list "Knowledge of human cultures" (AAC&U, 2007, p. 3) as a primary learning outcome of undergraduate general education.

At the research site of my study, IUB, faculty and administrators formulated a general education plan with the "[p]rimary [c]urricular [o]bjective [to] develop students' understanding of themselves, their sense of responsibility to others, and their knowledge of the social and natural worlds" (IU, 2009, p. 5). Folklore scholars have indicated that the academic discipline of folklore promotes these general education learning outcomes (Fish, 1984; Gabbert, 2010; Hirschi, 2001; Nicolaisen, 1984; Stekert, 1984). Although IUB was the first American higher education institution to offer the study of folklore to undergraduate students (IU Folklore Institute, *n.d.*), and houses one of the oldest and longest-running folklore undergraduate degree programs in the United States (American Folklore Society, 2020; Baker, 1971, 1986), a study of student learning outcomes from introductory IUB folklore classes has been discussed (Dolby, 1996) but never attempted, and is therefore long overdue. This study will begin to examine whether or not students in IUB folklore general education classes recognize and acknowledge cultural knowledge, understanding, and skills gained from these classes.

Statement of Problem

Though folklore educators intend for college students to gain cultural knowledge learning outcomes from folklore classes, little research has been done to ascertain whether undergraduate students actually gain such learning outcomes from folklore classes. Two studies, coming out of Utah State University, demonstrate the extent of 21st-century scholarship on the study of folklore as part of an undergraduate general education: Hirschi (2001) and Gabbert (2010). Hirschi (2001) listed a number of cultural knowledge learning goals, offered by her colleagues, for incorporating folklore research approaches into an English composition class, including:

- "'[P]rovides students with a better understanding of themselves and of society'" (p. 42);
- "'[P]rovides students with a better understanding of other people'" (p. 42);
- "'[F]ocuses on aspects of life often overlooked or undervalued'" (p. 42).

Hirschi's goals in teaching folklore methods reflect the needs of a globally and technologically connected society for the knowledge and skills to understand and work with people of different cultures. Gabbert (2010), in describing the ethnographic research project she required of the students in her Introduction to Folklore class, declared that such undergraduate research not only contributes to scholarly understanding of social life, but also that "[s]tudents learn about and come to more deeply appreciate community traditions" (p. 41).

Of the two studies, Hirschi's (2001) scholarship provided the most compelling student reflections on actual cultural learning gained from studying folklore, through the researcher's review of the student oral history research manuscripts in Utah State's Family Saga Collection. Through the students' cover essays, Hirschi (2001) discovered that, in using the folklore research approach of collecting their own family narratives, the students expressed gaining a sense of family pride, respect for family members, and a feeling of connection between past and present.

Hirschi's (2001) study represents a rare repository of student voices revealing their own meaning-making of the learning they achieved through the study of folklore. More research is needed, in order to provide undergraduate students with opportunities to reflect upon and to articulate their perceptions of cultural knowledge, understanding, and skills gained from folklore general education classes—the chief purpose of this study.

Purpose of Study

In order to amplify student voices—to supplement the predominant faculty and administrative voices—in investigating cultural knowledge learning outcomes, I interviewed undergraduate students who had recently completed a folklore general education class, for the first time, to allow them to articulate what they learned through that class. Though scholars have investigated survey data to determine student attitudes—generally negative—towards general education courses (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005; Hall, Culver, & Burge, 2012; Miller & Sundre, 2008), little research can be found that includes students' actual words expressing their perceptions of what they learned, including cultural knowledge. Though folklore educators have declared the benefit of gaining cultural knowledge and understanding through studying folklore in undergraduate general education (Fish, 1984; Gabbert, 2010; Green, 1984; Hirschi, 2001; Nicolaisen, 1984; Stekert, 1984), students have yet to be recorded in the research literature discussing the knowledge, about themselves and about others, that they may have gained in folklore general education classes. I interviewed first-time folklore general education students at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB), a large Midwest public research university and flagship campus. Through my interview protocol, I sought to answer three main research questions:

1. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, if at all?

2. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of cultures different from their own, if at all?
3. How do students articulate any usefulness of the cultural knowledge gained in a folklore general education class?

My unit of analysis was comprised of each student's story, as they reflected on their perceptions of cultural knowledge learning outcomes from the fall 2019 folklore general education classes they completed.

Conceptual Framework

In exploring college student development of cultural knowledge and understanding, and the possible role of a single folklore general education class in that development, I find King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model of *intercultural maturity* to be most helpful in conceptualizing students' movement from unreflective to more complex cultural awareness and understanding. King and Baxter Magolda (2005), in defining intercultural maturity as the capacity "of understanding and acting in ways that are interculturally aware and appropriate" (p. 573), bonded this idea to Kegan's lifespan development model, created in 1994, particularly the following "three dimensions of development" (p. 574):

1. Cognitive, "how one constructs one's view and creates a meaning-making system based on how one understands knowledge and how it is gained" (p. 574);
2. Intrapersonal, "how one understands one's own beliefs, values, and sense of self, and uses these to guide choices and behaviors" (p. 574);
3. Interpersonal, "how one views oneself in relationship to and with other people (their views, values, behaviors, etc.) and make choices in social situations" (p. 574).

In their own model, King and Baxter Magolda (2005) outlined three developmental stages or phases—initial, intermediate, and mature—within each of Kegan's dimensions, not only demonstrating the "multi-dimensional" (p. 574) complexity of intercultural maturity, but also indicating the level of maturity towards which students should be moving. King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model was further refined in 2015 by Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda, through using student interview data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education to identify transitional phases of intercultural development between the stages of each developmental dimension. Most appropriate to this present study, Perez *et al.* (2015) recommended providing students, who tend to arrive on college campuses at the initial phase of intercultural maturity, with educational experiences that allow students to listen, observe, compare, and reflect on "multiple cultural perspectives" (p. 774) and how those ideas relate to them personally as well as in interactions with others. In this present study, I explored how undergraduate students' exposure to the study of folklore, even in one class taken to fulfill general education requirements, may help move students towards more mature cultural awareness and understanding.

Significance of Study

Through this study, I hope to contribute to general education literature as well as to folklore education literature, in examining students' perceptions of cultural knowledge and understanding gained through folklore general education classes. As students' personal perspectives on learning outcomes rarely appear, either in the undergraduate general education literature or in the folklore undergraduate education literature, this research project provides an opportunity to hear from the population for whom introductory folklore courses have been created.

General education researchers have gathered survey data, aggregating student opinions towards general education courses as mostly negative and irrelevant to their daily lives (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005; Hall, Culver, & Burge, 2012; Miller & Sundre, 2008). Recently, Hopkins, a senior undergraduate student at Boise State University, completed a three-year research project on that university's general education program, University Foundations Program, to help his fellow students "[c]onnect the program to [their] future lives" (McMurtrie, 2019, para. 15), rather than consider such courses a waste of time. From his study, Hopkins concluded that the personal touch, discussing with students how general education courses made a difference in their lives, improved their attitudes toward the entire general education program (McMurtrie, 2019). Such findings corroborate the recommendations of other general education researchers, to improve student attitudes by helping students to connect general education knowledge to their majors and personal goals (Glynn *et al.*, 2005; Hall *et al.*, 2012). Through this present study, I provided 22 undergraduate students, who had just completed a folklore general education class, with a space to reflect on the cultural knowledge and skills they may have gained from those classes, and how their newly acquired knowledge may connect with their majors and make a difference in their lives. I hope to demonstrate, through my interview protocol, the usefulness of reflective opportunities in helping students to recognize cultural knowledge learning outcomes gained through folklore general education learning outcomes.

Despite Baker's (1971, 1986) surveys of folklore undergraduate programs, citing his own belief in the value of the study of folklore in developing empathic and empowered citizens, folklore scholars have admitted that folklore undergraduate education has scarcely been researched (G. Hansen, personal communication, May 30, 2018; J. Rosenberg, personal communication, April 1, 2018). The monograph *Teaching Folklore* (Jackson, 1984), which had a

limited distribution (G. Hansen, personal communication, May 30, 2018), and the two studies by Hirschi (2001) and Gabbert (2010) comprise the extent of scholarly literature on folklore undergraduate general education, leaving a gap in time, geography, and voice as to how folklore undergraduate education provides cultural knowledge and understanding to 21st-century college students. In the present study, I seek to lend the voices of some undergraduate students to the folklore education literature, in articulating how the study of folklore, in a folklore general education class, has contributed to their knowledge and understanding of themselves, of their own cultures, and of cultures different from their own. Through this research, I may be among the first researchers to take up Gabbert's (2010) challenge to seek a fresh understanding of cultural knowledge learning outcomes through undergraduate folklore education.

Key Terms

The key terms I am defining for this study relate to undergraduate curriculum, folklore, and cultural knowledge learning outcomes. I will clarify how I plan to use these definitions in the context of this present study.

General Education: Common Learning for All Undergraduates

The term *general education* appeared in the higher education literature in the early 20th century, as undergraduate liberal education became more specialized, and educational reformers sought to restore to the undergraduate curriculum some essential experience common to all students (Rudolph, 1977; Thomas, 1962). For this study, *liberal education* refers to an undergraduate curriculum that encompasses both general education and specialized education, "the product of a learning which unites knowledge of the methods of many fields, with a mastery of the content and methods of one field" (Thomas, 1962, p. 55). I find this term broad enough to describe the kind of education in which undergraduate students—especially in the pre-

professional schools—at my research site, IUB, are engaged: a common ground of the knowledge and research methodology of several disciplines, to enrich and expand students' learning in their major field or fields. In Chapter 2 of this study, when I encounter the term *liberal education* being used synonymously with other terms listed in this Key Terms section, such as *general education*, *liberal arts*, or *humanities*, I will endeavor to translate the author's usage of the term to the definition in this section that most closely aligns with his or her meaning of the term.

Also, as per Thomas (1962), for this study *general education* refers to the portion of a liberal education that is common to all undergraduate students at an institution, contributing "breadth of learning" (p. 55) in introducing students to the knowledge of broad disciplinary categories, including basic training in regimens such as precision, appreciation, hypothesis, and reflective synthesis, for the purpose of developing global citizens. I identify general education as the portion of the undergraduate curriculum in which all students, regardless of major, are supposed to be exposed to subjects meant to introduce them to contemplating their own identities and cultures, as well as to other people's identities and cultures. Most general education programs in the United States operate either as:

- Common core curricula, clusters of interdisciplinary courses required for all undergraduate students; or as
- Optional-course distribution plans, allowing students to fill general education requirements by choosing from a variety of courses, "in ways that will include some experience with all major fields of learning" (Thomas, 1962, p. 294).

When I mention the term *general education* in Chapter 2, I will refer to both of these types of plans, as indicated by the authors in the literature I review. When *general education* is used

synonymously with other terms, such as *liberal education*, *liberal arts*, or *humanities*, I will attempt to interpret the term used with the most precise definition, as described in this Key Terms section. In describing my research project, in Chapters 3 through 5, I will focus on the optional-course distribution type of general education plan at my research site, IUB, within which folklore courses represent choices for fulfilling specific undergraduate general education requirements, including cultural knowledge learning.

Other Terms Related to the Undergraduate Curriculum

The following terms are defined in this section in order to provide benchmarks for the usage of these terms in Chapter 2 and throughout my paper. When I find authors eliding these terms with each other, or with the terms defined above, I will do my best, in my literature review, to translate their use of the terms to the definition that most closely fits the meaning or context. When I am tempted to use terms imprecisely, I will refer back to this section in order to apply terms with care.

- *Liberal arts* encompass a curricular structure, composed of study in the arts, humanities, and social, natural, and physical sciences, designed with the purpose of cultivating awareness of these subjects in students, and of preparing students to live unencumbered by ignorance of the world around them.

I consider this term to comprise a specific educational structure that attempts to tie a student's specialization, or major, more closely to the learning objectives of the broad disciplines outside of the student's major. I view this as a narrower concept than liberal education, and one to which some small colleges, actually referred to as liberal arts colleges, adhere, and to which colleges within large research universities, such as the IUB College of Arts and Sciences, aspire. The importance of the liberal arts, in the context of this study, is the emphasis on helping students to

develop as citizens "of a free society" (Thomas, 1962, p. 232), promoted by objectives including cultural knowledge learning, in subjects such as folklore.

- *Arts* are creative disciplines—music, visual arts, dance, film, and drama—that allow the student to develop and apply physical, analytical, and imaginative skill, for self-expression as well as for imitating and interpreting the creativity of others (IU, 2009; Rudolph, 1977; Thomas, 1962).

In the context of this study, one important objective of cultural knowledge learning is an enhanced appreciation of creativity, both by practicing artistic methods as well as by studying the art that others produce, and by interpreting the meaning of that artistic expression in relation to the lives of the creators.

- *Humanities* are academic disciplines geared towards investigating, interpreting, and ameliorating the moral, ethical, and sociopolitical aspects of individuals and society (Delbanco, 2012), by learning "to think critically…to transcend local loyalties…to approach world problems as a 'citizen of the world'…to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 7). Researchers have identified disciplines in most humanities curricula to include "literature, philosophy, world cultures" (Thomas, 1962, p. 254), as well as religious studies, classical studies, languages (Lucas, 2006), and programs exploring diversity in the United States including African American, women's, and area studies (Rudolph, 1977).

In relation to this proposed study, the humanities represent the sector of the undergraduate curriculum that educators view as containing the richest content for guiding students towards knowledge of one's own culture as well as an understanding of cultures (Henscheid, O'Rourke, & Williams, 2009; Hurston, 1942/1995; Nussbaum, 2010). Nevertheless, as the humanities are

not the only curricular spaces through which cultural knowledge is proffered, the focus of this study will be cultural knowledge learning outcomes, not specifically on humanities learning outcomes.

- *Social sciences* are academic disciplines related to knowledge and skills in broad societal structures, combining "ethical concern" (Rudolph, 1977, p. 177) with scientific research methods. Social science subjects include economics, political science, sociology, psychology, and history (though history is still a humanities discipline at some institutions, per Thomas, 1962).

For the purposes of this research project, social sciences, along with arts and humanities, present another venue through which undergraduate students are introduced to social structures which influence and shape worldviews, both their own viewpoints as well as the viewpoints of other people. Therefore, in Chapter 2 both humanities and social sciences will be included in the disciplinary cultural knowledge development objectives of undergraduate general education. Among all the humanities and social sciences, the academic discipline of folklore will be explored as a subject for contributing to the cultural knowledge and understanding.

Folklore as an Academic Discipline for Gaining Cultural Knowledge

In this study, I define the academic discipline of *folklore* as the study of social groups and their communicative, creative, and artistic expression in everyday life, including verbal, material, and performance art forms transmitted from individual to individual, and from one generation or cohort to the next, allowing for individual innovative performance of transmitted communicative, performative, and artistic forms (Bauman, 1992; Glassie, 1989; Noyes, 1995, 2012). In examining the transmission of everyday creative expression within social groups, and across generations and cohorts within these groups, folklore educators aver that students of

folklore, including introductory general education classes, gain the ability "to recognize and analyze their own traditions" (Fish, 1984, p. 47), to "experience…other cultures more deeply" (Stekert, 1984, p. 62), and to maintain "open eyes to vital facets and dimensions of human life and culture" (Nicolaisen, 1984, p. 68). Since educators have insisted that gaining cultural knowledge is valuable for helping students to become mature members of society who can work well with others to create a better and more sustainable world (Delbanco, 2012; DuBois, 1903/1986; Nussbaum, 2010), folklore seems to be an ideal academic discipline to examine for training undergraduate students in cultural knowledge.

In discussing folklore as an academic discipline for gaining cultural knowledge, the following definitions will help me anchor the meanings of these aspects of cultural knowledge, throughout this present study:

- *Culture* denotes "[a] dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our lives as well as the lives of others" (Gay, 2018, p. 8), influencing social interactions "outside of written history and outside of printed law" (DuBois, 1903/1986, p. 487).
- *Cultural knowledge* refers to learning related to the values and behaviors of different social groups (Gay, 2018), including the disparate social groups to which each individual person belongs (Dundes, 1980), e.g., ethnic, gender, generational, racial, regional, religion, sexual orientation, vocational.
- *Cultural awareness* encompasses recognition and acknowledgement of one's own worldview, beliefs, and values, as well as of the existence of worldviews different from one's own (Marx & Moss, 2011, 2015).

I use these definitions in this study because I believe that culture forms the focus of cultural knowledge, and gaining cultural knowledge opens the way to cultural awareness, as an early stage in King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model of intercultural maturity development. I want to explore whether experience in a folklore general education class can act as a catalyst for students to gain cultural knowledge and to grow in cultural awareness.

Overview of Study

In the first chapter of this research project, I have introduced the academic discipline of folklore as a case study of a subject well-suited for training college and university undergraduate students in knowledge about their own cultures as well as knowledge about cultures different from their own, a key general education learning outcome. In Chapter 2, I outline bodies of literature involving: 20th- and 21st-century general educational movements in American higher education; the challenge to non-STEM disciplines in the sociopolitical philosophy of neoliberalism; the historical development of folklore as an academic discipline; and conceptual frameworks for developing cultural knowledge learning outcomes in students. In Chapter 3, I discuss my qualitative research design, and my positionality as a folklore education researcher in this present study. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of my research, allowing students to articulate their perceptions of how their fall 2019 folklore general education classes contributed to their cultural knowledge and skills, and how these findings relate to document analysis of course syllabi and class observation notes. In Chapter 5, I discuss these findings in relation to this study's research questions, literature review, and recommendations for future research and action.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Undergraduate general education curriculum has comprised the center of the debate of the purpose of American higher education. Rudolph (1977) described curriculum as "a locus and transmitter of value" (p. 3), higher education both shaped by and shaping American society. Lattuca and Stark (2009) portrayed the undergraduate curriculum at American colleges and universities as being affected by: external influences, "factors such as market forces, societal trends, government policies and actions, and disciplinary associations that exist outside colleges and universities" (p. 13); and internal influences, including institutional "mission, culture, and resources" (p. 68), "faculty members' specialization areas, values, and beliefs about education" (p. 81), and "student characteristics [:] demographic characteristics, academic preparation, student goals, attitudes, and personal traits" (p. 82). From the founding of Harvard in 1636, when young White male students were offered one classics curriculum, stakeholders including faculty, students, politicians, and business leaders have argued about what subjects college students should study, how they should be taught, and why they needed a baccalaureate degree (Rudolph, 1977; Wehlburg, 2010). Despite the incessant controversy surrounding higher education, Thomas (1962) insisted that, even during the late 19th century, in which "intellectual anarchy" (p. 71) reigned in the breakdown of the natural and social sciences into siloed departments and laboratories, the concept of 'general education' had always referred to a common learning to prepare all undergraduate students for more specialized learning.

As access to American higher education expanded through the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of the undergraduate curriculum continued to be influenced by the passions and concerns of faculty and students (Rudolph, 1977). In the last century, with the proliferation of different types of higher education institutions accommodating the increased access and

diverging interests of students of all types of backgrounds, American college and university educators have debated the need and importance of developing a "common curriculum" (Rudolph, 1977, p. 236) as a standard for undergraduate credentials and learning. To prepare students for work in a globally and technologically connected 21st-century society, educators, as well as business and industry leaders, identified key common knowledge and skills to include understanding and working with people in different cultures (AAC&U, 2007; Hart Research Associates (2015). Folklore, as an academic discipline within general education, has been purported to help students develop cultural knowledge and skills (Fish, 1984; Gabbert, 2010; Hirschi, 2001; Nicolaisen, 1984; Stekert, 1984). In this chapter I will discuss:

- some of the significant general education movements, innovations, and treatises of the last 100 years of American higher education;
- the sociopolitical philosophy of neoliberalism, which undergirds the main challenge to the undergraduate general education curriculum as posed by proponents of the modern market-driven approach to higher education;
- specific learning outcomes of understanding one's own culture as well as understanding cultures different from one's own, including exploration of conceptual frameworks for developing these outcomes in students;
- the use of folklore study in general education in contributing to the learning outcomes of cultural knowledge and skills.

Through this present study, I intend not only to explore whether or not students actually gain cultural knowledge learning outcomes from folklore general education classes, but also to demonstrate the importance of student voices in articulating the value of cultural knowledge learning outcomes in undergraduate general education.

General Education in 20th-Century American Higher Education

In this section, I will introduce some of the most influential movements and institutions in the evolution of general education in American colleges and universities, from the 20th into the 21st centuries. I believe one reason for the continuously contentious nature of the debate over the content and conveyance of general education stems from the intransigence of the chief decision makers to allow for the legitimacy of the voices of a broader section of higher education stakeholders. I will endeavor to critique these historical conceptions of general education to demonstrate how an insular view of general education outcomes, particularly of cultural learning, may have stunted the effectiveness of general education for all students.

By the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, American higher education had experienced an expansion of access, primarily through the establishment of state land-grant colleges, which opened doors for a broader base of students—albeit still mostly White men—to prepare for a burgeoning variety of professions (Wehlburg, 2010). As faculty became more specialized in their research and teaching interests, college and university leaders sought ways to provide all students with a broad base of common learning (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Thomas, 1962; Wehlburg, 2010). Truman, in Bell (1966), defines this broad base of learning, or general education:

> [P]roviding a common, if not always uniform, intellectual experience for all students for at least a portion of their undergraduate years, that experience not being bound by the conventional limits of particular disciplines. (p. x)

While this definition indeed corresponds with the definition of general education delineated in Chapter 1, I must note that not all American college students were included in this broad base of common learning. Wheatle (2019) noted that "[t]he collective voices of Black land-grant college leaders and African American citizens were not represented throughout the legislative process"

(p. 18) in allocating funding and setting curriculum for state land-grant institutions through the 2nd Morrill Act of 1890. Gelber (2011) discussed how White academic Populists of the late 19th century, with their wide-ranging influence on state land-grant institutions, demonstrated "apathy or hostility toward minorities" (p. 57), only looking to the White majority for opinions, and circumscribing the types of learning supplied at Black land-grant institutions. Therefore, discussion of general education, at least up through World War II (Jones, 2010), took place largely without the voices of people of color within higher education.

Both Thomas (1962) and Wehlburg (2010) pinpointed 1909 as the beginning of the modern American general education movement, as Lowell replaced Eliot as president of Harvard—long the bellwether institution for American undergraduate curricular innovations—and subsequently replaced Eliot's "open elective system" (p. 5) of courses with a distribution system of introductory courses. Wehlburg (2010) noted that, while the elective system at Harvard had pleased both students, who could take whatever courses they wanted, as well as faculty, who could teach to their own research interests, the open elective system obliterated any coherence in what accumulated knowledge a baccalaureate signified. Wehlburg (2010) asserted that Lowell's distribution requirements reformed undergraduate education by allowing choices in courses in specific distribution areas, "the biological sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities in order to better coordinate academic experiences in general education" (p. 5). Thomas (1962) credited Lowell's "principle of concentration and distribution" (p. 56) for putting the brakes on the headlong plunge into individual curricula of late-19th-century American higher education, named by Thomas as "an important undertaking in the historical development of ideas about general education" (p. 56). While Wehlburg (2010) indicated that the distribution requirement plan—referred to by Thomas (1962) as the optional-course distribution plan—

became the norm at many other American colleges and universities, constituting the extent of "integration and coherence of the overall education of students" (p. 16) for the next 80 years, historians noted that other influential White institutions, such as Columbia College, Reed College, and the University of Chicago, sought to develop other strategies for establishing a common base of knowledge, including cultural knowledge, and values for their undergraduate students, in the early 20th century (Bell, 1966; Rudolph, 1977; Thomas, 1962).

Experiments in General Education during the Interwar Period

In the wake of World War I, American higher education leaders moved with a sense of urgency to dispel some of the divisiveness in American society that had appeared in wartime. Rudolph (1977) characterized the American higher education period of 1920 to 1940 as one in which "[g]eneral education both in purpose and progress sought to unite 'a man with his fellow man' just as specialization divided 'men according to their individual competencies'" (p. 256). I dare say the author intimated such desired unity as being within dominant White male society, not necessarily as an understanding and acceptance of all one's fellow citizens. Rudolph (1977) and Thomas (1962) identified two kinds of general education curricula growing up side-by-side in the first half of the 20th century:

1. A group of core courses for every student in their first two years, or the common core curriculum.
2. Distribution courses chosen from different groupings of courses, or the optional-course distribution plan—although no national agreement existed as to what kinds of courses should be grouped together.

Geiger (2015) credited Erskine of Columbia and Hutchins of University of Chicago, in the 1920s and '30s, for planting the seeds of durable general education curriculum, with broad humanities

courses forming a common core for all undergraduate students at those institutions, "aimed at unifying knowledge across disciplines and providing a fundamental (or general) basis of knowledge prior to specialization" (p. 467). Bell (1966) and Rudolph (1977) summarized the makeup and influence of both of these institutions' programs.

Columbia College. Rudolph (1977) considered Columbia a key innovator in the general education movement in designing its common core type of general education program: a "freshman course in contemporary civilization" (p. 256), as well as "core courses in the humanities and social studies" (p. 257). Bell (1966), in his examination of Columbia College's general education in comparison with programs at Harvard and the University of Chicago, credited two "important influences" (p. 14) in the development of Columbia's general education program:

1. The challenge of assimilating all the splintered new social sciences;
2. Educating young people on the issues of war and peace surrounding America's involvement in World War I, incorporating this purpose with introducing new American immigrants to seminal Western thought.

Bell (1966) named three main elements of Columbia College's general education program:

- "[T]he tradition of the liberal arts rather than to professionalism;
- [S]ocial diversity in its student body;
- [C]ommitted to no doctrinal philosophy of education other than exposing the student to major intellectual ideas and expanding his imagination" (p. 21).

Here, Bell's usage of 'liberal arts' appears to dovetail with the definition mentioned in the Key Terms section of Chapter 1 of this current project: a curricular structure, designed to cultivate awareness of the arts, humanities, and sciences in students, to prepare students to live

unencumbered by ignorance of the world around them. Bell (1966) defined liberal education on the basis of Columbia's two-year course sequences in Contemporary Civilization and in the Humanities: "to give the student a historical grasp of the background and traditions of Western civilization and the movements of ideas and imagination, of social forces and social conflicts within that great stream" (p. 214). Bell's definition of 'liberal education' better matches this paper's usage of the term general education, referring to the portion of a liberal education that contributes "breadth of learning" (Thomas, 1962, p. 55) to the education of all undergraduate students at an institution. Notwithstanding his presentation of such breadth of learning, Bell's definition of contemporary civilization excluded cultural knowledge learning beyond Western civilization, an understanding of education that would leave American students of the mid-1960s.impoverished for meeting future national and global challenges. While Rudolph (1977) lauded Columbia's general education innovations as influential to other institutions, Bell (1966) characterized the two-year general education program as providing Columbia with its "distinction…[and] identity" (p. 4), particularly in the program's longevity at the institution. Again, I argue that the longevity of such a narrow 'breadth' of learning may not ultimately be helpful to 21st-century American undergraduate students.

University of Chicago. Bell (1966) contrasted Columbia's brand of cohesive general education curriculum with that of the University of Chicago. The general education program at the University of Chicago, which Bell (1966) referred to as "the Chicago plan" (p. 31), was composed of a complicated amalgam of great books and interdisciplinary discussion. Bell (1966) described President Hutchins's three-part general education proposal of the 1920s:

1. Wrapping the last two years of high school into the first two years of college, forming a BA degree in General Education at the end of four years.

2. Setting one four-year general education program for all students, with no electives or specializations.
3. Including courses that would examine important issues from each disciplinary perspective—"the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences" (p. 31).

Bell stated that most aspects of the Chicago general education program proved untenable, as other colleges and universities, as well as students and parents, pressed Chicago to conform to more traditional educational schemes, particularly as University of Chicago students applied for graduate school at other institutions. Nevertheless, as Rudolph (1977) noted, Hutchins's experiment inspired curricular innovations at other institutions, as two former Chicago faculty members successfully implemented a great-books curriculum at St. Johns in Annapolis, Maryland, which Rudolph referred to as "the ultimate design in general education" (p. 280), particularly of the common-core variety. Whether such a design was considered forward-thinking even in the 1920s, a look at the current list of St. John's (2021) great-books curriculum reveals an almost overwhelmingly White, male view of cultural knowledge, with no introduction of any writers of color till the third year. I consider Rudolph (1977) short-sighted in lauding this type of general education for preparing students for 21st-century citizenship.

The Harvard Report of 1945: A General Education Plan for All Americans

The second era of the 20th-century general education movement began at the close of World War II (Wehlburg, 2010). From 1943 to 1945, a committee of 12 Harvard faculty members took on the task of delving into the entire American educational system, from kindergarten-12th grade (K-12) through undergraduate and post-baccalaureate education, for the purpose of "the infusion of the liberal and humane tradition into our entire education system" (Harvard Committee, 1946, p. xv). With a postwar concern for promoting and maintaining a free

society, coupled with a self-appointed assumption of the mantle of American educational leadership, the Harvard Committee devised an intricate general education scheme to connect all facets of the American educational pipeline. In the Harvard 'Redbook' Report, the Harvard Committee (1946) members averred that the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities should all be used in general education to teach people "*to think effectively*" (p. 65, emphasis in original)—logically, relationally, and imaginatively—"*to communicate thought, to make relevant judgments,, to discriminate among values*" (p. 65, emphasis in original). In the committee's opinion, liberal education was meant to develop the whole person, not just the intellect; to develop not just a good man, "one who possesses an inner integration, poise, and firmness" (Harvard Committee, 1946, p. 74), but also one who is able to be a good citizen within a democracy, a free person able both to be loyal, as well as to think for himself and critique society in order to improve society.

In their report, the members of the Harvard Committee (1946) spoke in elitist tones, as they discussed the socioeconomic differences among people, referring to differences of "mind and outlook" (p. 86) that were expected to be expressed through "the varied powers innate in people" (p. 85). Though the committee members insisted that all Americans should learn that their historical heritage includes "racial prejudices" (p. 139), contemporary African American scholars such as Derbigny countered the Harvard Committee's statement, claiming that American higher education exhibited a lack of concern for the general education of Black students (Jones, 2010). The Harvard committee's (1946) treatise ends with suggestions for a Harvard general education curriculum that would combine both a common core, consisting of a literature course and a Western civilization course, as well as a selection of general education courses in American democracy and human relations, and a two-tiered general education science

program, one for science majors and one for non-science majors (Harvard Committee, 1946). The thoroughness of the committee's report included the members' meticulous elaboration of recommendations for incorporating general education into all types of American educational institutions, from early childhood education through colleges and universities (Harvard Committee, 1946). The authors of the Harvard 'Redbook' Report of 1945 mapped a plan meant to connect all Americans to the values and knowledge of democracy and civility as hallmarks of a free society, at least from a White male point of view.

The effectiveness of the Harvard committee in general education reforms consisted more of discussion than of implementation (Rudolph, 1977; Wehlburg, 2010). Bell (1966) noted that the 'Redbook' plan differed radically from contemporary Harvard practice, which consisted of a complicated optional-course distribution plan, with no cohesion. Bell commented that, despite the committee's lofty goals, Harvard never implemented the committee's plans, as the faculty had no will or desire to put together interdisciplinary general education courses for all students. Also, the positionality of the Harvard committee belied their stated mission: as representatives of the most selective segment of higher education, the committee presumed to be looking out for the social welfare of a wider swath of citizens than they were willing to serve at their own institution, traditionally closing their doors to "Catholics, Jews, racial minorities, and women" (Synnott, 2004, p. 195). Notwithstanding these inconsistencies, the Harvard Report of 1945 continues to be upheld as a landmark document in the articulation of general education curriculum, due to its standardizing effect on undergraduate education—helping to set general education as one-third of a baccalaureate degree—and the committee's stimulation of the American higher education debate of how to offset necessary specialization with "the integration and coherence of the overall education of its students" (Wehlburg, 2010, p. 6).

General Education as a Renewed Call for Consensus

By the final quarter of the 20th century, educators seeking "*consensus*" (Bell, 1966, p. 51, emphasis in original) in undergraduate general education curricula were challenged by the expanding demographics of the American college-going population, and the variety of voices represented within diversifying campus student bodies (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1977; Joseph, 2003; Rudolph, 1977; Solomon, 1985; Wehlburg, 2010). As noted by the above researchers, students from more cultural groups were filling seats in institutions originally established to educate well-to-do White males, and were insisting that their cultures mattered in learning about and understanding society in general, and American society in particular. While authors such as Bell (1960) most likely considered 'consensus' to mean the status quo, I believe the relevance of undergraduate general education at that time depended upon broadening the scope of cultural knowledge learning.

Women and people of color had been pressing for inclusion in the American liberal arts curriculum for decades. This use of the term "liberal arts" corresponds to this project's definition of the term as noted in Chapter 1 of this paper. Solomon (1985), in her study of women in American higher education, noted that, in the early 20th century, women faculty, relegated to home economics departments in higher education institutions, taught not only "cooking and sewing" (p. 87), but also "at advanced levels…social and scientific implications" (p. 87) of women's work, which Solomon declared "foreshadowed women's studies courses" (p. 87). While 'women's work' greatly expanded in American workplaces during World War II, to replace men who had entered military service, Solomon (1985) described the 1960s, with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the heyday of the Black civil rights movement, as spurs to a vocal American women's movement. Eisenmann, a student of Solomon,

chronicled the work of "Second Wave feminist scholars" (2018, p. 271) from 1965 to 1985, such as Graham, Heilbrun, and Conway, whose ground-breaking research on women's academic spheres and uses of higher education provided the foundation for women's higher education scholarship, including Solomon's. Solomon (1985) pointed to the opening of elite colleges to women, Title IX enlarging opportunities in women's athletics, and especially scholarship "affected by women's interest in their roles and their past" (p. 204) as helping to engender women's studies as part of the "liberal arts curriculum" (p. 204). In my view, the study of the multifaceted culture of women in American society could only enhance the presence and achievements of women, and men, in higher education.

Black scholars such as W. E. B. DuBois (1986 [1903]) called for the study of Black American history and culture early in the 20th century, not only to encourage Black American people but also to "make their loving, living and doing precious to all human hearts" (p. 438). Joseph (2003) credited the "early 20th-century 'Negro History Movement' pioneered by historians Carter G. Woodson and J. A. Rogers" (p. 182) as a forerunner of the Black activists who would rise up in the wake of the 1954 Supreme Court decision ending American educational segregation to call for "political revolution through cultural rebirth" (p. 184). Joseph (2003) outlined the influence of the Cold War and the African anti-colonial movements on Black American writers and thinkers of the 1950s and '60s, whose forceful essays, speeches, and debates raised the consciousness and the voices of Black students in major American cities from coast to coast. Such ferment gave birth to the Black student association movement at University of California Berkeley in 1960, and the Black Studies Movement at San Francisco State University in 1967. Joseph (2003) described the establishment of Black Studies programs, at all types of higher education institutions—historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as

well as predominantly White institutions (PWIs)—as a means for Black scholars to "gain control of 'cultural institutions' that were misrepresenting African American history and contemporary black life" (p. 193) As Joseph (2003) noted, the study of African American history and culture can increase the awareness of Black and White students to social justice and the achievements and struggles of American communities of color.

The higher education world imagined even by the Harvard Committee (1946), characterized by Rudolph (1977) as education "for a predestined white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant elite" (p. 262), had endeavored to become more inclusive by the mid-1970s, and dominant voices in higher education called for a new examination of curricular issues, in order to determine the kind of common educational experience they felt could bring coherence to the multiple institutional types and missions of the American higher education milieu.

In 1977, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT) published a monograph reviewing contemporary curricular trends, problems, and possible suggestions for strengthening "the mission of the [higher education] institution" (CFAT, 1977, p. 11). In noting the rise of consumerism in higher education, resulting in the proliferation of institutions of all types, the authors named "*three dimensions for special effort*" (CFAT, 1977, p. 15, emphasis in original) in reforming the undergraduate curriculum, and general education in particular:

1. "*Basic skills;*
2. *Connections with the world of work;*
3. *Moral values*" (p. 15, emphasis in original).

The authors pointed out that the "'real curriculum'" (CFAT, 1977, p. 97) of higher education institutions is not actually "the formal curriculum" (p. 97) of courses listed in college catalogs, but rather the courses in which students actually enroll, as recorded on student

transcripts. Since general education, comprising about one-third of an undergraduate education, contained the bulk of the humanities courses that the average college student would take in the 1970s, the authors recommended that humanities and social science scholars connect these areas of study—the areas exploring humankind's thought, action, power, and social relations—"to the perennial questions that confront humanity" (CFAT, 1977, p. 108). I believe the newest cultural studies additions to the American higher education curriculum could help students to make these types of connections.

The authors of the CFAT report insisted that in implementing general education as "a common, basic undergraduate learning experience" (CFAT, 1977, p. 121), colleges and universities would be fulfilling their mission to promote in students' lifelong integration of learning as well as the value "of their own humaneness" (p. 240). The CFAT report, in calling for a renewal of the general education curriculum in American higher education, did indeed compel many institutions to reinstate optional-course distribution requirements, as a way of providing undergraduate students with at least a semblance of a common learning experience (Wehlburg, 2010). Nevertheless, as Wehlburg (2010) noted, such an educational scheme would be deemed inadequate, in the globally and technologically complex world of the next century. The purpose of this current study is to explore at least one aspect of what an adequate 21st-century undergraduate general education scheme should include: cultural knowledge learning, in disciplines purported to impart such knowledge, including women's studies, African American studies, and folklore.

Current General Education Initiatives of the 21st Century

The context of this present study is the second decade of the 21st century, and the ongoing debate over the composition of American undergraduate general education curricula for the

present generation of students. American colleges and universities in the 21st century remain a popular destination for many people interested in preparing for meaningful and remunerative work. Hartman (2017) noted that the general education movement within American higher education survived the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, as political conservatives and liberals tussled over what should be included in the curriculum of subjects such as history, literature, and philosophy. Hartman (2017) declared that, despite state support dwindling, higher education costs rising, declining political opinion of the value of the humanities, and a "fractured" (p. 138) American identity, scholarship in the humanities is still necessary for studying American identity, and for wrestling with the vitally important questions regarding local, national, and global citizenship. Sorum (1999), Dean of Arts and Sciences at Union College, articulated the reciprocity of the positive effects in centering the humanities—including subjects that focus on cultural knowledge, such as women's studies, African American studies, and folklore—within the general education curriculum:

> General education acts as a prism for the goals of the humanities; through a multiplicity of formats, it introduces students to a conversation that encourages young people to formulate a conception of the good that transcends their specific, if honorable, utilitarian ends, and begins for them the process of answering and re-answering the questions that confound us. (p. 261)

In a fast-paced, globally and technologically connected world, the purposes of general education required re-articulation for 21st-century undergraduate students. I argue that the voices of 21st-century undergraduate students should enter the assessment of these general education calibrations, to provide their perspectives of how—or whether—general education outcomes are being met.

Consolidating 21st-Century General Education Goals

Early in the 21st century, with Harvard leading other institutions of higher education to implement new general education requirements tied to student learning outcomes (Nelson Laird, Niskodé-Dossett, & Kuh, 2009), other stakeholders of higher education attempted to articulate and consolidate general education learning outcomes. Among the stakeholders of American higher education, professional associations, such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), supported efforts to articulate and assess essential general education learning outcomes. In 2007, the AAC&U published two such reports: one by Miller (2007) and one by the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) (AAC&U, 2007).

Miller (2007), whose article was published as an introduction to the LEAP report, provided illustrative examples of individual campus assessments of the essential learning outcomes outlined in the LEAP report (AAC&U, 2007). Miller (2007) highlighted:

- Worcester Polytechnic's program of "three major projects" (p. 19) to help students demonstrate learning in inquiry and critical thinking, in Humanities and Arts, team problem solving, and their major.
- Drury University's "Global Perspectives 21 curriculum" (p. 27) of "four required global studies courses" (p. 27) to prepare students "for living in an ever-changing global society" (p. 27).
- Hampshire College's interdisciplinary curriculum providing "three divisions of study" (p. 31) in which students practice integration of study by working up their own research questions and designing their own curriculum around exploring these questions.

In presenting these examples of essential learning outcomes, Miller (2007) introduced the LEAP report as an initiative to connect "'liberal' and 'applied' learning in order to prepare students for success in a diverse democracy and an interconnected world" (p. v.) The "'liberal'" referred to by Miller (2007), and later in the LEAP report (AAC&U, 2007), seems to most closely adhere to this current project's definition of liberal arts, a cultivation of awareness of the arts, humanities, and social, natural, and physical sciences, to mitigate students' ignorance of the world around them, and to be applied in the more specialized knowledge and skills of their majors.

The creators of the LEAP report (AAC&U, 2007) asserted that focus in higher education priorities of access, cost, and accountability omitted important learning outcomes, "the kind of learning [students] need for a complex and volatile world" (AAC&U, 2007, p. 1). In order to represent the diversity of stakeholders in higher education, the council authoring the LEAP report included: leaders and faculty members of AAC&U member institutions; senior officials from organizations associated with higher education, including the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT); state government officials; and leaders in business and industry fields including insurance, law, media, technology, and national security and defense (AAC&U, 2007). In checking the demographic makeup of the 31 council members, I found that nearly half (15) were women, and nearly a third (9) were non-White. As Wehlburg (2010) observed that "accreditation requirements mandate that general education programs have specified outcomes and appropriate assessment plans in place" (p. 8), so the LEAP council members desired to provide a template for institutional general education programs from coast to coast (AAC&U, 2007). The LEAP authors indicated that all students, regardless of major, needed and deserved a broad liberal

education, to be challenged and liberated "not just to adapt to change, but to help create it" (AAC&U, 2007, p. 16).

Transcending academic silos, the LEAP authors charged faculty to collaborate, "teaching students to integrate and apply their learning" (AAC&U, p. 18), so that every student could enjoy "*a high level of integrative learning and demonstrated accomplishment across the full range of essential learning outcomes*" (p. 19, emphasis in original). The key to the LEAP plan of action comprised four essential learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world.
2. Intellectual and practical skills.
3. Personal and social responsibility.
4. Integrative learning. (AAC&U, 2007, p. 3)

Besides preparing students with the skills to interact in a global economy, the LEAP authors also called for intentionality in teaching citizenship, to raise a more democratic society of knowledgeable and caring citizens (AAC&U, 2007). The LEAP council supplied seven principles and 15 recommendations for constructing courses of action to help students develop the essential learning outcomes (AAC&U, 2007). Through this report, the AAC&U sought to inspire institutions of higher education to build general education programs, beginning with knowledge of human cultures, that would help prepare students of the 21st century for meaningful and profitable vocational, personal, and social lives.

As the site for this proposed study, Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) exemplifies current general education curricula. Using the LEAP report (AAC&U 2007) as a model, IUB sought to develop a curriculum "to prepare all students to meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities of life in the 21st century" (Indiana University [IU], 2008, para. 1). Though each

degree-granting unit on campus had been maintaining its own general education practices, the IUB Faculty Council began discussion of a campus-wide general education program in 2006, and formally proposed the initiatives in fall 2007, to begin fall 2011 (IU, 2009). The faculty's articulation of the program's purposes is reminiscent of the Harvard 'Redbook' Report (Harvard Committee, 1946):

> Regardless of vocation, graduates will need to rely on their abilities to think critically, creatively, and independently; to adapt; to assess the validity of evidence and arguments; to ask thoughtful questions and propose defensible answers; to test the conclusions of others; to challenge perceptions; to recognize opportunities; and to engage with the world around them. (IU, 2008, para. 4)

While enumerating learning outcomes for each aspect of the general education plan, the IUB faculty (IU, 2009) provided the greatest detail of learning outcomes, across the disciplines, in cultural knowledge and skills.

Several sections of the plans for the IUB general education program (IU, 2009) delineate learning outcomes developing cultural knowledge and skills in undergraduate students. In the Arts and Humanities (A&H) Breadth of Inquiry section, cultural knowledge and skills to be gained include understanding modes of human expression as a manifestation of culture, both one's own culture as well as the cultures of others (all following citations have emphasis in original):

1. "*Knowledge* of origins, varieties, and meanings of the expressions and artifacts of human experience" (IU, 2009, p. 7); the faculty listed artifacts such as works of literature, visual art and design, musical compositions, and theatre and drama.

2. Knowledge of those artifacts' "cultural, intellectual, and historical contexts" (IU, 2009, p. 8).
3. Knowledge of those artifacts' "modes of symbolic expressions and aesthetic and/or literary conventions" (IU, 2009, p. 8).
4. "*Ability to develop arguments, ideas, and opinions* about forms of human expression" (IU, 2009, p. 8).
5. "*Ability to create or reinterpret artistic works*" (IU, 2009, p. 8).
6. "*Ability to explain and assess the changing perspectives* on the meanings of arts and humanities traditions, and to explore one's own identity within prior and current intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural frameworks" (IU, 2009, p. 8).

These learning outcomes indicate the potential for the arts and the humanities in developing cultural knowledge and skills in undergraduate students.

In the "Key Measures" (IU, 2009, p. 8) section of the Social and Historical Studies (S&H) Breadth of Inquiry section, the IUB faculty (IU, 2009) expressed the intent for the social sciences to promote cultural learning:

> Students who successfully complete this requirement will improve their
>
> 1. Knowledge of Human Cultures and Physical and Natural World
>
> a. Human culture knowledge through understanding of history, social situations, and social institutions….
>
> 3. Personal and Social Responsibility
>
> a. Intercultural knowledge…. (IU, 2009, p. 8)

IUB faculty expected the disciplines of history and the social sciences to contribute to the cultural knowledge and skills of undergraduate students. The study of folklore at IUB, featured

in this present study, straddles the arts and humanities and the social and historical studies, both broad inquiry fields with cultural knowledge learning outcomes.

Authors of the IUB general education program (IU, 2009) created a list of learning outcomes for World Languages and Cultures. In this section, students are expected to improve in cultural knowledge and skills through study not only of foreign languages, but also of arts and humanities, social and historical studies, and specifically through introduction to area studies, both international and domestic:

Knowledge:

1. Understanding culture within a global and comparative context (that is, the student recognizes that his/her culture is one of many diverse cultures and that alternate perceptions and behaviors may be based in cultural differences).
2. Demonstrates knowledge of global issues, processes, trends, and systems (that is, economic and political interdependency among nations, environmental—cultural interaction, global governance bodies, and nongovernmental organizations).
3. Demonstrates knowledge of other cultures (including beliefs, values, perspectives, practices, and products).

Skills:

4. Uses knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternate perspectives to think critically and solve problems.
5. Communicates and connects with people in other learning communities in a range of settings for a variety of purposes, developing skills in each of the four modalities: speaking (productive), listening (receptive), reading (receptive), and writing (productive).

6. Uses foreign language skills and/or knowledge of other cultures to extend access to information, experiences, and understanding.

Attitudes:

7. Appreciates the language, art, religion, philosophy, and material culture of difference cultures.
8. Accepts cultural differences and tolerates cultural ambiguity.
9. Demonstrates an ongoing willingness to seek out international or intercultural opportunities. (IU, 2009, pp. 8-9)

These learning outcomes not only span a variety of disciplinary areas, but also connect to the purpose and conceptual framework of this proposed study: to explore whether these learning outcomes are actually being met through general education at IUB. However, before exploring the kind of research required to assess the progress of educators' efforts to move students towards proficiency in such areas as "social…and cultural issues in national and international contexts" (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005, p. 152), we must first acknowledge and consider one of the greatest challenges to promoting successful general education programs: the prevalence of the modern market-driven approach to higher education, supported by the sociopolitical philosophy of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism and De-Valuing Non-STEM Disciplines in American Higher Education

Included in the 21st-century context of this present study, on cultural knowledge learning outcomes, is the contested place of non-STEM disciplines alongside societal neoliberal attitudes. In the last few decades, the philosophy of neoliberalism has taken root and spread throughout American society, affecting most social control systems in the country, including higher

education. Brown (2015) defined the reasoning of neoliberalism as a shift in viewing individuals and institutions:

> [B]oth persons and states are construed on the model of the contemporary firm, both persons and states are expected to comport themselves in ways that maximize their capital value in the present and enhance their future value, and both persons and states do so through practices of entrepreneurialism, self-invested, and/or attracting investors. (p. 22)

Relating neoliberalism to higher education, particularly since the mid-1980s amid a rising clamor of external higher education stakeholders for student learning assessment (e.g., Bok, 1986; Cohen, 1985; Turnbull, 1985), Lea (2014) noted that the role of colleges and universities had moved from promoting the public good to "[producing] educational products available for private acquisition through the transactions of the market" (p. 280). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) referred to this effect on higher education as the "academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime" (p. 15): colleges and universities, seeking to benefit economically, caught up in the "privatization, commercialization, deregulation, and reregulation" (p. 21) of the neoliberal state. Slaughter and Rhoades displayed academic capitalism in opposition to the "public good knowledge/learning regime" (p. 28)—"valuing knowledge as a public good to which citizenry has claims" (p. 28)—declaring that the two regimes actually co-exist, and "interact at points where money for research…becomes entrepreneurial funding" (p. 30). These authors explained that, since research has been imbued with economic benefit since World War II—first for the military, then for space, and later on for healthcare and for industry—the worth of science education has long been measured by "federal grant and contract funding" (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 185). Such funding, not easily available to non-STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Mathematics) departments, presses faculty, particularly in humanities departments, either to develop new programs or to reorganize their curricula to attract students (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Taylor, Cantwell, and Slaughter (2013) averred that because federally funded research grants tend to go to STEM fields, and also because tuition-paying students seek direct-path majors, policymakers tend to view non-STEM majors—particularly the humanities, history, and cultural studies—as unproductive. Taylor *et al*. (2013) observed that, as colleges and universities depend on the resources forthcoming from state and federal funding and student tuition, higher education institutions are motivated to de-emphasize the humanities on their campuses. The value of non-STEM disciplines, particularly the humanities, tends to rate low in quantitative variables, obscuring the noncommercial benefits that scholars claim for education in the humanities, the social sciences, and cultural studies. Part of the purpose of this present study is to explore students' perceptions of some of the noncommercial benefits of the study of folklore, as an example of cultural studies disciplines, in an undergraduate general education.

Contemplating Higher Education without the Humanities Mindset

American scholars warn that, without a curriculum that prepares students to live unencumbered by ignorance of the world around them, higher education will sink into the paucity of individual and societal development and freedom that characterizes a neoliberal regime, in which every aspect of life is viewed only in economic terms (Brown, 2015). Educational philosophers such as Brown (2015), Giroux and Giroux (2004), and Nussbaum (2010) lament the loss of democracy, and the loss of esteem for the kind of education that fosters the public good. In personifying universities as the soul of society, Brown (2015) described neoliberalism affecting higher education as "[shrinking] the value of higher education to

individual economic risk and gain, removing quaint concerns with developing the person and citizens or perhaps reducing such development to the capacity for economic administration" (p. 23). Giroux and Giroux (2004) portrayed the loss of concern for the public good more starkly:

> Neoliberalism not only separates politics from economic power, destroys the public sector, and transforms everything according to the mandates of the market; it also obliterates public concerns and cancels out the democratic impulses and practices of civil society by either devaluing or absorbing them within the logic of the market. (p. 72)

Brown (2015) insisted that as individuals became less able to steer themselves, whether individually or collectively, "no longer is there an open question of how to craft the self or what paths to travel in life" (p. 41). Brown depicted the democratic promise of higher education as being engulfed by "the market value of knowledge" (p. 188). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) insisted that universities be named as accomplices in the neoliberal state, positioning themselves for pay and prestige. Hartman (2017) also held both politically conservative and politically liberal humanities scholars liable for the damage done to public trust in higher education, during the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Bennett (2018) echoed this criticism, declaring that, in politicizing the humanities in particular, scholars have deprived themselves of the authority they have as experts to hold in tension as well as to emphasize "similarity as well as difference, continuity as well as rupture, collective sustenance as well as individualistic emancipation, you as well as me" (para. 40). Hartman (2017) explained that the opportunity for multicultural education to promote "social democratic values" (p. 137) eroded into "identity politics [and] individual achievement" (p. 137)—both values undergirding the policy of neoliberalism to promote the private, as opposed to the public, good.

Even more pointedly, educational philosophers expose the dangers of this division of person from person, "the limitations of those divisive relations and alienated identities produced by neoliberalism" (Giroux & Giroux, 2004, p. 82). Giroux and Giroux (2004) illustrated the "fearmongering" (p. 15) from the government and the media, resulting in criminalization of the poor, the young, and people of color. Brown (2015) accused institutions of higher education of jettisoning their post-World War II promise to serve a broad public:

> After more than a century of public higher education construed and funded as a medium for egalitarianism and social mobility and as a means of achieving a broadly educated democracy, as well as for providing depth and enrichment to individuality, public higher education, like much else in neoliberal orders, is increasingly structured to entrench rather than redress class trajectories. (p. 184)

These portraits of American higher education belie the projection of possibility laid out by Bradley at the dawn of the 21st century:

> "By the year 2010, fewer than 60% of those entering the workforce will be native-born white Americans. Increasingly, the economic future of the children of white Americans will depend on the talents of nonwhite Americans—who will be a larger and larger number of the teachers and lawyers, doctors and inventors and business-people in America. Above all this means that productive relationships between people of all colors and beliefs will be essential to our future." (Bradley, as quoted in Hirschi, 2001, p. 4)

Without a change in the defensive and defeatist stances and strategies of humanities scholars and educators in particular, and without a decrease in the denigration of a liberal arts education, educational philosophers foresee a dark future for half the population—and, by extension, American society as a whole—that requires higher education degrees in this decade and the next.

In this present study, I explore the potential of student voices for weighing in on the perceived gains of a liberal arts education, using one cultural studies discipline, folklore, as an example.

Negotiating Neoliberalism in the Liberal Arts Curriculum

Champions of the liberal arts in higher education insist that, though the spirit of neoliberalism is not inexorable, scholars must get involved in purposefully pursuing democracy and freedom of thought and action (Brown, 2015; Giroux & Giroux, 2004). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) commented on the potential for "faculty, academic managers, and students" (p. 338) of higher education institutions "to leaven the new economy focus on technology with the ongoing and emergent human challenges and opportunities that we confront in a globalizing world" (p. 337). Giroux and Giroux (2004) challenged American universities to maintain their place at the intersection of public and private spheres, to struggle against, instead of to acquiesce to, both totalitarianism as well as "the collapse of the public sphere into the private" (p. 41). Other scholars agree that fully participatory democracy is not as tidy as the neoliberal conception of democracy, depicted as "requiring technically skilled human capital, not educated participants in public life and common rule" (Brown, 2015, p. 177). Nussbaum (2010) offered the basis of successful democracy as requiring skills coming from the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences:

> the ability to think critically; the ability to transcend local loyalties and to approach world problems as a 'citizen of the world'; and finally, the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person. (p. 7)

Nussbaum noted that a business culture, which neoliberal reasoning fosters, does not call for all citizens to be "imaginative and critical" (p. 11), whereas "[d]emocratic participation makes wider demands" (p. 11), particularly of educated citizens with potentially wider spheres of influence.

Giroux and Giroux (2004) insisted that cultural studies—these disciplinary areas that broadened the humanities in the 1960s and 1970s, including folklore, African American studies, and women's studies—help students comprehend "a central sphere of politics" (p. 90), and provide a bridge for concerns regarding "culture and material relations of power" (p. 90). The authors left no chance of misunderstanding their reference to culture, providing a comprehensive definition of the term:

> [A] circuit of power, ideologies, and values in which diverse images, texts, and sounds are produced and circulate; identities are constructed, inhabited, and discarded; agency is manifested in both individualized and social forms; institutions produce and constrain social practices; and discourses are created that make culture itself the object of inquiry and critical analyses. (pp. 90-91)

Brown (2015), Giroux and Giroux (2004), Nussbaum (2010), and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) all sought to awaken humanities and culture studies scholars and educators, in particular, to the vitality of their disciplines in dispelling from American society and culture the pervasive fog of neoliberal reasoning.

Defenders of the humanities, in particular, in higher education called for action from their scholarly colleagues, in order to strengthen what Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) designated the "public good knowledge/learning regime" (p. 28) which they insisted yet exists alongside neoliberalism. Hartman (2017) declared the humanities still to be the best place in which to keep debating "what it means to be an American" (p. 139), since the question remains vitally important in American society. In calling for a revitalization of the 'culture wars' within the humanities, Hartman suggested that both conservative and liberal scholars be less dogmatic, and

less disdainful of each other, so as to allow the humanities to "once again become *relevant* to broader arenas of public debate" (p. 140, emphasis in original).

Giroux and Giroux (2004) went a step further, urging cultural studies educators, in particular—which includes folklorists—not only to use the forum of the classroom to empower students "to embrace and defend democratic values" (p. 114), but also to lend their own academic expertise to collective action, in education as well as in other arenas where social issues reside. Giroux and Giroux (2004) connected action to academics, in characterizing activism as intrinsic to the academic scholarship of cultural studies:

> [Cultural studies are] not about constructing a linear narrative, but about blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, acknowledging the manner of its transmission, and recapturing its concern with human suffering, struggles, values, and the legacy of the often unrepresented or misrepresented. (p. 105)

Educational philosophers, far from accepting the neoliberal placement of cultural studies on the fringes or even the sidelines of undergraduate education, demand prominent space for cultural studies in an undergraduate general education curriculum in order to help develop thoughtful and empathetic people ready and able to shape "a world that is worth living in" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 143). What needs to be ascertained, as a goal of this present study, is whether or not the recipients of this education—undergraduate students themselves—acknowledge that they are indeed gaining the cultural knowledge about themselves and others that can make a positive difference in how they view and interact with the world.

Cultural Knowledge Learning Outcomes

In order to elevate the value of humanity beyond financial and economic standards, one of the most important tasks assigned to 21st-century American higher education encompasses

helping students to understand both their own cultures as well as cultures different from their own, through the undergraduate general education curriculum. As an example in this present research, the study of folklore, with its focus on the everyday cultural expression of social groups, may be an illuminating experience for undergraduate students to learn to appreciate cultural differences. Gay (2018) provided an up-to-date definition of culture: "a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others" (p. 8). I argue that exposing undergraduate students to the cultural values and behaviors of different social groups constitutes a responsible use of educational resources, in preparing students for a dynamically interactive world.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) listed both of these cultural knowledge outcomes among their seven vectors of psychosocial student development theory:

- Their 4th vector of psychosocial student development, developing mature interpersonal relationships, includes "tolerance and appreciation of differences" (p. 48).
- Their 5th vector, establishing identity, includes gaining "a sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context" (p. 49).
- Their 7th vector, developing integrity, "involves three sequential but overlapping stages" (p. 51), including
    - "humanizing values…balancing one's own self-interest with the interests of one's fellow human beings" (p. 51);
    - "personalizing values-consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view" (p. 51);

- "developing congruence-matching personal values with socially responsible behavior" (p. 51).

However, researchers testing Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory with various student populations have discussed some of the limitations of these student development vectors. Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, and Barnes (2005) stated: "Reisser (1995) noted that Chickering's original theory was limited in that it was based on students in small liberal arts colleges who were primarily traditionally aged students" (p. 461)—not to mention those students being nearly all White. Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) insisted that Chickering's foundational assumptions of "Western values such as individualism, independence, and self-exploration" (p. 46) contrast with the lived experiences of Asian American students, and other students of color, who must constantly negotiate the dominant history and social norms of the white American educational system with traditionally collective family and community values. Both Foubert *et al* (2005) and Kodama *et al* (2002) questioned the sequential nature of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors, finding that female students (as denoted by sex in the demographics of many universities, and so will appear in this study) and students of color tend to develop their "sense of self within the context of values from family and society" (Kodama *et al*, 2002, p. 54), and suggesting that development of interdependent relationships may be healthier than developing autonomy, for college students. Through their theories and critiques, all of these scholars demonstrate the interconnectedness of self-knowledge with the understanding and appreciation of other people's cultural backgrounds, in college student development.

From the 20th into the 21st century, scholars have developed several theoretical frameworks for exploring cultural knowledge development, both of self and of others, through an undergraduate education. The concepts of culturally relevant, or culturally responsive, pedagogy

(Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995, 2013; Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017), multicultural education or competence (Banks, 2006; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004), intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015), and intercultural or cross-cultural development (Marx & Moss, 2011, 2015; Spitzer, 2015) frame some of the comprehensive plans for cultivating cultural knowledge in today's undergraduate students.

Culturally Relevant/Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally relevant, or culturally responsive, pedagogy describes a method of teaching students, particularly students outside of the dominant White, middle-upper socioeconomic class, American culture, from the context of their own cultures. Ladson-Billings (1992) defined the concept and goal of culturally relevant teaching:

> [T]he kind of teaching that is designed not merely to *fit* the school culture to the students' culture but also to *use* student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge….to empower students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change. (p. 314, emphasis in original)

Working primarily with elementary-school teachers, Ladson-Billings sought to help students, particularly African American students but also Native American and Hispanic students, to understand and take pride in their own cultures—cultures which had been routinely ignored and often denigrated in American mainstream education, literature, and media (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995, 2013). Ladson-Billings (1995), further elaborating on culturally relevant teaching, asserted that the concept

> rested on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must

> develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (p. 160)

Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995) highlighted successful strategies that teachers had used to promote cultural competence in students of color, including: reflexive learning through journaling; "linguistic code switching" (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 317) between Standard English and Black English; and building partnerships with the students' families and neighborhoods. Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995) outlined desired learning outcomes from culturally relevant pedagogy to include: development of students' self-respect; development of respect among students; cultivation of students' trust in the importance of their cultures as part of the knowledge gained in the classroom; and meeting the challenge to criticize the standard curriculum, "to examine conventional interpretations and to introduce alternate ones" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 163). Ladson-Billings (2013) declared that culturally relevant pedagogy confronts the "educational debt" (p. 105) that emanates from the systemic inequalities undergirding the academic differences between students of color and White middle-class students, "the historical, economic, socio-political, and moral components of inequality that shape the contours of this nation" (p. 105). Ladson-Billings (2013) challenged fellow scholars to create culturally relevant educational environments for the current generation of students, or "'New Century' students" (p. 107), in order to instill in them hope for a future of mutual dignity and purpose.

The concept of culturally relevant teaching is generally synonymous with the idea of culturally responsive teaching, defined by Gay (2018) as "teaching…which centers classroom instruction in *multiethnic cultural frames of reference*" (p. xxvii, emphasis in original). Gay (2018), in updating her research and producing a new edition of her monograph on culturally

responsive teaching (CRT), expressed similar assertions as had Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995, 2013), including:

- The observation that not only do students and teachers bring their own cultures into the classroom, but also that embedded in the whole US educational system is the prevailing culture "of European and middle class origins" (Gay, 2018, p. 9).
- The declaration that "[c]onventional [r]eform is [i]nadequate" (Gay, 2018, p. 12).
- The belief in the "[s]trength and [v]itality of [c]ultural [d]iversity [in facilitating students'] school success" (Gay, 2018, p. 15).

Gay (2018) placed the beginning of CRT in the multicultural education of the 1970s, explaining that her early research came "out of concerns for the racial and ethnic inequalities that were apparent in learning opportunities and outcomes, and that continue to prevail" (p. 33). Noting that the majority of K-12 teachers are females from White, middle-class backgrounds, Gay wrote to educate teachers on how to become culturally responsive teachers, so as to provide all young learners with the opportunity to learn from their own cultural contexts, as White American students have had the privilege of doing for more than three centuries. Key to Gay's (2018) instruction of pre-service and current teachers is

> for teachers to develop consciousness and clarity about their [own] beliefs associated with ethnically, racially, culturally, socially, linguistically, and residentially diverse students, communities, heritages, and education. (p. 23)

The author painstakingly detailed steps and recommendations in gaining CRT skills for pre-service K-12 teachers, current K-12 teachers, and graduate students preparing to teach college students. Gay (2018) insisted that, as instructors become aware of their own biases, and exhibit respect for their students' "cultural knowledge and skills…as valuable teaching-learning

resources" (p. 243), students would gain the self-respect needed in order to open up "to explore new knowledge horizons and different avenues of learning without their human dignity and cultural identities being demeaned or compromised' (p. 244). Through her scholarship, Gay (2018) endeavored to build an atmosphere, both in the classroom and on campus, that would inspire all students to know and value their own cultures, as a prerequisite for being able to value and appreciate cultures different from their own.

While educators using earlier versions of Gay's framework of culturally responsive teaching focused on preparing pre-service teachers for primary and secondary school classrooms (Howard, 2003; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), researchers recently have begun to explore the effects of cultural responsiveness on college campuses, in helping undergraduate students persist to degree completion (Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017a, 2017b). Museus, Yi, and Saelua (2017a, 2017b) examined how the level of college students' sense of belonging, defined as "students' psychological sense of connection to their community" (Museus *et al.*, 2017a, p. 2), contributed to their retention and persistence on campus. In noting research on the differences between the experience of White students and students of color on predominantly White campuses, Museus *et al.* developed a model of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE). The table below outlines the CECE model's two subcategories and nine elements of campus environments (Museus *et al.*, 2017a):

Table 1

Summary of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) Model

Subcategory	Elements of Campus Environments
Cultural relevance—"the degree to which learning environments are relevant to	Cultural familiarity—having faculty, staff, and students on and near campus to whom students can relate

[students'] cultural backgrounds and identities" (p. 3)	Culturally relevant knowledge Cultural community service—being able to work for and help their "own cultural communities" (p. 3) Meaningful cross-cultural environment Culturally validating environments—how well campus environment supports all of the above
Cultural responsiveness—"the extent to which campus support systems effectively respond to the needs of culturally diverse student populations" (p. 3)	Collectivist cultural orientations—valuing collaborative as well as individual efforts Humanized educational environments—culture of care Proactive philosophies—providing all students with all of the information they need Holistic support

Through two studies using the "CECE four-year college survey" (Museus *et al.*, 2017a, p. 5), the researchers made several discoveries, including:

- the usefulness of the CECE model for ascertaining the effect of campus environments on White students as well as on students of color;
- the close relationships between cultural validation and the level of cultural familiarity present on campus;
- the salience of holistic support and collectivity cultural orientation in a sense of belonging for students of color;

the potential for the CECE model to be used as an assessment tool to help college and university campuses to become more culturally engaging.

The work of Museus *et al.* (2017a, 2017b) not only extends the concept of culturally relevant or responsive pedagogy to the environment and curriculum of higher education, but also highlights the fact that American institutions of higher education currently contain multicultural

populations of students, faculty, and staff, who must learn to work together for the success of the educational enterprise. In this present study, I will explore how the study of folklore, as an example of culture studies, in undergraduate general education may help students to function more knowledgeably and skillfully in such a multicultural atmosphere.

Multicultural Competence

Understanding one's own culture, as well as understanding and appreciating cultures different from one's own, are learning outcomes that must be developed in an increasingly multicultural world. Banks (2006) defined multiculturalism as "[r]acial, cultural, ethnic, language, and religious diversity" (p. 143), and noted the increase of diversity in countries all over the world. Banks (2006) and Gay (2018) both identified the rise of multicultural education in the 1960s and 1970s as responses to protests of the lack of democratic content in American education. Grant (2006) observed the detrimental effects of the "dual structure" (p. 163) of racism and the distrust engendered by a segregated plural society, and considered such effects as fallout from the resistance of the dominant social order to the presence of multiculturalism in America. Grant (2006) declared that, instead of students of color being considered an assimilation problem for White teachers to solve, American educators should provide *all* students with meaningful lessons about other groups as well as their own. Particularly for K-12 education, Banks (2006) identified five "dimensions of multicultural education" (p. 146), including: "(1) content integration, (2) the knowledge of construction process, (3) an equity pedagogy, (4) prejudice reduction, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure" (p. 146). Banks's (2006) plan for multicultural education invoked "culturally responsive teaching" (p. 148) as an educational mindset needed in order to teach students "how to live together in civic, moral, and just communities that respect and value the rights and cultural

characteristics of all students" (p. 146). Banks challenged teachers to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by multiculturalism and a diverse student body, to gain rich knowledge, ideas, skills, and collaboration. I believe such teacher preparation should begin at least in undergraduate education, through cultural studies courses, such as folklore, that allow pre-service teachers to learn about themselves and about communities different from their own.

Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) extended the concept of multicultural education to higher education: while concentrating their scholarship on the training of student affairs professionals, the authors' work can apply to the instruction of undergraduate students as well, as the main population served by student affairs professionals. Pope *et al.* (2004) sought to help student affairs professionals develop multicultural competence, which they defined as "those awareness, knowledge, and skills that are needed to work effectively across cultural groups and to work with complex diversity issues" (p. xiv). Noting the complexity of diversity, Pope *et al.* averred that, in order to acquire a "global conceptualization of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills" (p. 14), students must first become aware of their own "values, attitudes, and assumptions" (p. 15). Pope *et al.* described multicultural knowledge as including growth in understanding and appreciating "the multidimensionality of identity and how all individuals are influenced by membership and experiences in a variety of cultural groups" (p. 23). Paradoxically, Pope *et al.* named a "culturally skilled" (p. 24) individual as one who, while seeking practice in speaking up on behalf of cultural groups different from one's own, is also willing to acknowledge the need to gain more knowledge, and to seek feedback and collaboration. In their plan to train student affairs professionals in multicultural competence, these authors provided steps that would help lead undergraduate students to multicultural competence as well, activities including: self-reflection; reading about and meeting many

different kinds of people; and intentional engagement in the process of gaining multicultural competence (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). The intentional effort to educate undergraduate students to gain multicultural competence has been articulated in scholarship that explores the developmental stages and strategies best suited for inculcating multicultural competence in the college student population. Since educators in disciplines such as folklore seek to challenge students to reflect on their cultural traditions, ponder cultural stereotypes, and question their own cultural assumptions (Green, 1984; Hirschi, 2001; Stekert, 1984), the study of folklore within an undergraduate general education may propel students towards multicultural competence—a topic I begin to explore in this present study.

Intercultural Maturity and Intercultural Development

In identifying a suitable conceptual framework for helping undergraduate students develop cultural knowledge and skills, higher education researchers have examined and expanded upon the strategies of intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015) and intercultural development (Marx & Moss, 2011, 2015; Spitzer, 2015). Though the names of the concepts appear to refer to the same ideas, each concept, albeit related to one another, rests on different theoretical bases.

Intercultural maturity. The concept of intercultural maturity relates to patterns of development in awareness and interaction, from unreflective to more complex understanding. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) created a model of development in intercultural maturity, a learning outcome they defined as the capacity "of understanding and acting in ways that are interculturally aware and appropriate" (p. 573). King and Baxter Magolda (2005) used Kegan's lifespan development model, created in 1994, particularly the following "three dimensions of development" (p. 574):

1. *cognitive*, "how one constructs one's view and creates a meaning-making system based on how one understands knowledge and how it is gained" (p. 574);
2. *intrapersonal*, "how one understands one's own beliefs, values, and sense of self, and uses these to guide choices and behaviors" (p. 574);
3. *interpersonal*, "how one views oneself in relationship to and with other people (their views, values, behaviors, etc.) and make choices in social situations" (p. 574).

Bonding these dimensions with the concept of intercultural maturity, King and Baxter Magolda (2005) demonstrated the "multi-dimensional" (p. 574) complexity of intercultural maturity, as well as the steps students must take to reach this level of cultural knowledge and skills. In their model of intercultural maturity, King and Baxter Magolda (2005) outlined three developmental stages or phases within each dimension, indicating the level of maturity towards which students should be moving:

- In the cognitive dimension, intercultural maturity included being able to accept knowledge as constructed "from personal experience, evidence from other sources, and others' experience" (p. 576).
- In the intrapersonal dimension, also referred to as *identity development*, intercultural maturity was described as being "characterized by a sense of self in which various aspects of one's identity are integrated in ways that provide a culturally-sensitive and well-considered basis for making decisions about intercultural interactions" (p. 579).
- In the interpersonal dimension, intercultural maturity involved a "shift from norm-based to principled reasoning" (p. 581) in intercultural relations, reflecting "students' ability to examine the fairness of social systems [and]…the understanding that social systems are cultural constructions and can be changed" (p. 581).

King and Baxter Magolda (2005), in examining student comments from earlier studies on intercultural maturity, noted that undergraduate students rarely demonstrated growth beyond the intermediate stage of intercultural maturity, which included being able to accept their place in "multiple realities" (p. 584) and being willing to develop their own self-definitions. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) invited other researchers to use their model of development in intercultural maturity to assess the model's usefulness in producing "more effective educational interventions" (p. 589).

Ten years later, Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda (2015) reviewed King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model of development in intercultural maturity, or ICM, in order to both "illustrate the developmental trajectory described in King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) conceptual framework, and to identify ways to refine the model" (Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda, 2015, p. 760). In choosing student interview data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS), the authors used the ICM to analyze a narrow sample of the WNS data in order to discover students' meaning-making and descriptions of intercultural experience (Perez *et al.*, 2015). Perez *et al.* identified transitional phases of intercultural development, particularly between the initial and intermediate levels of each dimension, or domain, as well as more attributes for each level of each domain. Perez *et al.* (2015) recommended that, since undergraduate students tend to arrive on campus at the initial phase of intercultural maturity, educators need to help students move towards the intermediate level of maturity, with the following suggestions:

- Cognitively, "through introducing multiple cultural perspectives and then providing appropriate scaffolding to help them sort through the ideas" (p. 774).

- Intrapersonally, with "opportunities to explore identity as socially constructed and to consider the interactions of social identities" (p. 774).
- Interpersonally, with "support to understand the ways in which social structures and power differentials influence social interactions" (p. 774).
- "Across domains" (p. 774), providing students with the safety to listen, observe, compare, and reflect.

The authors' research on intercultural maturity development not only elucidates the way along which undergraduate students travel towards cultural knowledge and skills, but also establishes strategies for guiding undergraduate students towards intercultural maturity. In this present study, I plan to explore how exposing undergraduate students to the study of folklore, within general education, may help move them towards intercultural maturity.

Intercultural development. The concept of intercultural development relates to instructing students to become culturally aware, both of their own cultural views as well as how they interact with people who have different cultural views (Marx & Moss, 2011, 2015). This purpose addresses the initial phase of King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model of intercultural maturity, at which many undergraduate students enter college. Marx and Moss (2011), in their research on pre-service teachers studying abroad, began with the observation that the majority of American pre-service teachers belong to the dominant White middle-class culture. The authors noted that, since most pre-service teachers grow up in American public school systems, these pre-service teachers may assume that all American public school experiences are similar, and therefore may not be aware of the divergent needs of the culturally diverse urban student populations in which they may be placed for student teaching (Marx & Moss, 2011). Marx and Moss (2011) declared that student teacher placement programs need to provide pre-service

teachers with "opportunities to confront their own ethnocentric views and the support needed to engage in critical cultural reflection" (p. 36). I note such research as an expansion of Banks's (2006) recommendation for teachers to prepare to teach multiculturally.

Marx and Moss (2011) examined study-abroad immersion programs for student teachers, particularly IUB's "Cultural Immersion Projects" (p. 37), to demonstrate the value of such experiences in developing in the students an understanding of self and others, and providing "cultural reflection" (p. 37). Marx and Moss (2011) connected their ideas to the concept of intercultural sensitivity development, borrowing Bennett's idea, developed in 1993, of moving "from ethnocentric to ethnorelative thinking" (p. 37). In following one IUB pre-service teacher through her entire student teacher experience at "an inner-city, state-run secondary school in London" (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 40), the authors noted how "the experience of cultural dissonance [had] the potential to rouse [the student's] cultural consciousness and increase intercultural sensitivity" (p. 43). As Marx and Moss (2011, 2015) studied both the preparatory and the re-entry semesters of the pre-service teacher's study-abroad experience, the researchers ascertained that the most valuable factors for successful intercultural development included "an experienced intercultural guide" (2011, p. 45), ample opportunities for critical reflection, and an "intentionally designed re-entry" (2015, p. 45) program "to engage in cultural reflection and cross-cultural comparisons" (2015, p. 46). Marx and Moss (2011, 2015) insisted that the main point of international cultural immersion for pre-service teachers needs to be development of intercultural sensitivity as "the cultural other" (2011, p. 43), and then "to transfer intercultural understanding and intercultural communication skills learned in an international, cross-cultural experience to domestic, cross-cultural educational contexts" (2015, p. 39). The scholars concluded their research reports with a warning, that in "[connecting] *inter*national, intercultural

understandings and skills to the development of *intra*-national, intercultural skills" (Marx & Moss, 2015, p. 48, emphasis in original), instructors need to also help students grapple with "the social and political dimensions of domestic diversity, including institutional racism" (2015, p. 48). Marx and Moss (2011, 2015) imagined their work as an aid to culturally responsive teaching, helping pre-service teachers to develop interculturally in order to become "culturally responsive" (2011, p. 36) teachers for America's multicultural public schools. Considering how few students are able to take advantage of such a study-abroad learning experience, I propose to demonstrate, through this current study, how undergraduate students of all types of majors, including pre-service teachers, may move toward intercultural maturity through enrolling in general education classes in cultural studies, such as folklore, that are available to all of an institution's undergraduate students.

The work of Marx and Moss (2011), particularly in the creation of survey tools to administer to pre-service teachers before and after their international intercultural experiences, influenced the research of Spitzer (2015) in her pilot general education class, "Developing Cross-Cultural Understanding" (Spitzer, 2015, p. 50). Spitzer (2015) associated Marx and Moss's (2011) idea of intercultural development with the concept of cross-cultural competence, borrowing the definition from other scholars: "'a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts'" (Spitzer, 2015, p. 49). Spitzer (2015) expressed the importance of a general education course to meet the needs of introducing undergraduate students to cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, especially students for whom such subject matter is not built into their major course of study. Spitzer (2015) devised a course to help students not only to explore and reflect on their own cultural heritages, but also to communicate this learning to one another, in turn learning

about "the experiences, beliefs and practices of their classmates" (p. 50). Using Marx and Moss's (2011) MyCAP (My Cultural Awareness Profile) survey, Spitzer (2015) tested 35 class participants on cultural awareness and sensitivity, both at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Spitzer (2015) concentrated on four dimensions of cross-cultural competence:

1. *Exploring the Global World* (Global Perspective);
2. *Learning about Different Cultures* (Cultural Awareness);
3. *Knowing Ourselves as Cultural* (Perspective Consciousness);
4. *Communicating across Cultural Differences* (Intercultural Communications. (p. 52)

In searching higher education literature, Spitzer's study may have been the first research project to use the MyCAP survey tool to test the growth of undergraduate students' cultural awareness.

Though Spitzer's (2015) post-test survey provided mostly positive results in student attainment of cross-cultural knowledge, her research report presented more problems than answers. A couple of problems stemmed from the "ambiguous construction" (Spitzer, 2015, p. 55) of survey statements, as the author admitted. As a matter of fact, the author herself erred in interpreting student's responses to ambiguously constructed statements. For example, Spitzer (2015) misinterpreted the results for statement #7:

> The statement *Culture is more about traditions, celebrations, and history than about core values* (#7) showed that 46% of the students *somewhat agreed* with this statement in the pre-course survey, whereas the post-course responses showed that 41% of the students *somewhat agreed* with it. These responses indicated that students reported a slight decrease (-5%) in the understanding of what culture is at a deeper level. (p. 53)

Since Spitzer (2015) did not point readers to the Appendix of the article, readers may remain unaware that the response "*somewhat agree*" is the only positive response choice students are

given on the MyCAP to answer the question. Even more confusing, culture indeed revolves around values as much or more than around practices, as Spitzer (2015) indicated earlier in the article: “values and traditions…experiences, beliefs and practices” (p. 50). The fact that a lower percentage of students post-course agreed with statement #7 indicated that the class members, as a whole, actually grew in their understanding of culture. Spitzer committed this type of analytic error twice, in reporting results, at least partially demonstrating the difficulty in using surveys without becoming adequately familiar with the survey tool.

A more general problem with Spitzer’s (2015) report involves her description of the course she created. Though Spitzer (2015) intended to lead undergraduate students in exploring their own cultural backgrounds, as well as in learning about their classmates’ backgrounds, the instructor failed to supply a conceptual framework for the context of topics she named, such as dominant culture, culture shock, acculturation, and sociocultural differences. Spitzer (2015) mentioned requiring much reflection and sharing from students’ personal experience, as well as fieldwork, without indicating how students would learn the significance and strategies for considering these concepts thoughtfully and critically. Spitzer’s (2015) study illustrates the need for educators in culture studies areas—including fields such as anthropology, women’s studies, and folklore—to examine the undergraduate learning outcomes of intercultural competence from their own established culture studies disciplines. Noting the lack of care in Spitzer’s (2015) course design and subsequent research process, I suggest that cultural area scholars, such as folklorists, with their knowledge and skills in the lived cultural expression of different social groups, may handle the research of intercultural competence learning outcomes, through the study of folklore, with more insight and care in the research plan, purpose, and presentation.

The Study of Folklore and Intercultural Competence

My research project features the study of folklore as an example of how undergraduate students perceive learning outcomes in cultural studies general education courses. Folklore, the study of groups of people and their communicative, creative, and artistic expression in everyday life, comprises an academic field with sturdy theoretical underpinnings and rich scholarship examining many different areas of the world. While the development of folklore as an academic discipline continues to involve more voices and modes of cultural expression, scholarship on the study of folklore within undergraduate education is scarce.

Folklore as an Academic Discipline in Undergraduate Education

Though the study of folklore as a discrete academic discipline entered higher education relatively recently, scholars have dated the study of people groups as beginning at least 300 years ago (Bauman, 1992a). The two intertwining debates within folklore scholarship include which people should be studied—folk—and what constitutes the creative expression worth studying—lore.

Historical background of folklore as an academic discipline. Bauman (1992a) placed the roots of the study of folklore in 18th-century German social theory—referred to by Noyes (2012) as romantic nationalism—as European nation-states sought those seemingly timeless cultural artifacts and expressions that instilled national pride. Bauman (1992a) credited the coining of the term "folklore" to William John Thoms, a British historical scholar, who in 1846 (Bascom, 1968) defined folklore as the "manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time" (Bauman, 1992a, p. 29). Researchers noted that 19th-century folklore scholars, as part of the elite socioeconomic class, referred to the 'folk' as groups of people who lived in small, rural, or circumscribed communities, generally thought of as isolated from more cosmopolitan centers (Bauman, 1992b; Briggs, 1992). In the early 20th century,

African American scholars DuBois (1986 [1903]) and Hurston (1995 [1945], 1995 [1950]), refuted this elitist version of folklore. These researchers insisted that studying the folklore of people of color should teach White people that they and people of color share "commonality of feeling…having things in common" (Hurston, 1995 [1950], p. 953), rather than viewing people of color as "exceptional" (Hurston, 1995 [1950], p. 954) or "quaint" (Hurston, 1995 [1950], p. 954). Scholars such as DuBois and Hurston formed the vanguard of redefining the 'folk,' which concept finally began to broaden in the 2nd half of the 20th century (Bascom, 1968; Noyes, 2004). Noyes (2012) noted that folklore scholars continue to focus on the cultural traditions of lower socioeconomic groups, those creative expressions resistant to dominant ideologies and therefore useful for contesting authority. Nevertheless, Noyes (2012) also pointed out that folklore has lost some of its old-timey aura in search of contemporary folklore, and the public identities of all kinds of social groups in the modern world. Dundes's (1980) concept of the 'folk' prevails: "*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor" (p. 6, emphasis in original)—e.g., region, gender, generation, religion, ethnicity, occupation—and that everyone belongs to several folk groups, switching codes from group to group.

The list of items of social groups' everyday creative expression, or lore, that are studied by folklore scholars has also expanded. From Thoms's 19th-century coining of the phrase, Bascom (1968) described the focus of scholars as being the forms, or genres (Ben-Amos, 1976) that are created through social interactions: "folk learning…all knowledge transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation or example" (Bascom, 1968, p. 496). While verbal art, defined by Bascom (1968) as "folktales, legends, myths, proverbs, riddles, and poetry" (p. 497), appears most often in "scholarly literature" (Noyes, 2004), folklorists also study material culture, such as textiles, pottery, adornment, and memorials

(Glassie, 1989). All of these forms are encompassed in Hurston's (1995 [1938]) definitions of folklore: "the boiled-down juice of human living….still in the making….the arts of the people before they find out that there is any such thing as art, and they make it out of whatever they find at hand" (pp. 875, 876).). Noyes (1995, 2012) stated that, since the 1970s, folklorists also examine performance culture—e.g., festival, dialogue across boundaries, display events—as well as phenomena including collective action for social justice, folklore dealing with trauma and disasters, and the problems of cultural heritage within the tourism industry. Despite the proliferation of concepts of folk and lore, the central concept of ongoing transmission of creative processes within social groups, preserving "a general tone, a sound, a look, a certain spirit" (Glassie, 1995, p. 408) through numerous individual repetitions of creative expression, boils down all of folklore scholarship to the study of two elements: tradition, or the transmission of art forms from one generation to the next, allowing for change and innovation; and the social group. In this study, I will explore how undergraduate students, exposed to the study of current societal issues from such a cultural perspective, may gain knowledge and skills that enable them to conduct themselves more maturely in interpersonal and social contexts.

The study of folklore as an academic discipline in American higher education initially emerged from departments of English and literature, or from interdisciplinary committees, of English, foreign languages, and anthropology colleagues (Baker, 1971). Hurston (1995 [1945] credited her mentor, Franz Boas of Columbia College, as the father of modern American anthropology and folklore. Baker (1971) and Rudy (1997) noted Harvard University's leadership in the introduction of an undergraduate folklore program, through the institution's English department. Rudy (1997) explored the influence of Harvard faculty members Child and Kittredge—referred to by Baker (1971) as "pioneer American folklorists" (p. 225)—in the life

and scholarship of Stith Thompson, founder of the Folklore Institute at IUB and creator of the first undergraduate folklore class, Introduction to Folklore, through the Anthropology department in 1942 (IU Folklore Institute, n.d.). In Baker's (1971, 1986) surveys of folklore undergraduate programs, enthusiasm and funds for developing folklore baccalaureate programs across the country rose, then waned, through the 1970s and 1980s. As one of the few enduring programs in postsecondary folklore education (American Folklore Society [AFS], 2020), IUB constitutes a model of undergraduate exposure to the study of folklore.

The development of a BA degree program in folklore at IUB. Stith Thompson, a protégé of American pioneer folklore scholars Child and Kittredge of Harvard (Rudy, 1997), arrived at IUB in 1921, to direct the freshman English composition program (Martin, [ca. 1978]). Thompson began teaching graduate-level folklore classes through the English department in 1923, and by 1939 was named by President Herman B Wells to the "first Professorship of English and Folklore in the United States" (Martin, [ca. 1978], p. 8). In 1942, Thompson not only held the "first Summer Folklore Institute, a gathering of folklore students and scholars in Bloomington" (Martin, [ca. 1978], p. 9), but he also conducted the first undergraduate folklore class in the United States (IU Folklore Institute, n.d.). Within the Folklore Institute, Thompson "established the PhD program in folklore" (Martin, [ca. 1978], p. 9) in 1950, during his tenure as Dean of the Indiana University (IU) Graduate School. Upon Thompson's retirement in 1953 (Rudy, 1997), his successor, Richard Dorson, moved the Folklore Institute towards becoming an academic department in 1965 (Indiana University (IU), 2018a; Rudy, 1997). Dorson also led in the creation of the Folklore BA program, which joined the PhD and MA programs within the Folklore Department in 1971 (IU Folklore Institute [ca. 1972]), the second such program after Harvard (Baker, 1971).

The Folklore BA program at IUB, benefitting from the popularity of undergraduate folklore classes, began with high hopes of being a robust entity on campus, as indicated in the IUB campus newspaper:

> The year-old undergraduate major in folklore has attracted many, courses are heavily enrolled each semester—with large increases the last three years. Dorson said, 'The interest of students in folklore comes from their discovery of folklore as a study of humanity.' (McCord, April 22, 1972, p. 4)

The timing of the Folklore BA program coincided with the emergence of other academic programs, in response to female students and students of color who sought courses relevant to their lived experience (Lattuca & Stark, 2009): the IU Afro-American Studies Department was founded in 1970 (IU, 2018b), while the IU Women's Studies program opened in 1973 (IU, 2018c). Interest in the study of culture and identity, in higher education, accompanied the rise of multicultural education in kindergarten-12th grade (K-12) settings in the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 2006). Members of the IUB Folklore BA program, in its earliest years, recalled a welcoming departmental atmosphere, from faculty, staff, and the 30-40 fellow undergraduate major students (J. Rosenberg, personal communication, April 2, 2018). The BA program of study, over the next 10 years, developed into a nine-course plan, "including an introductory level course, a course in theory and methodology, and a seminar on a special topic" (IU Folklore Institute, [ca. 1984], p. 4).

Nevertheless, as Baker (1986) noted in his survey of folklore undergraduate programs, the desirability of the Folklore BA program had waned, along with the study of folklore at institutions across the country. By 1984, the Department of Folklore, while still acclaimed for its popular "basic service courses" (IU Folklore Institute, 1984a, p. 4), had shrunk to a "slim" (IU

Folklore Institute, 1984a, p. 4) number of undergraduate majors, having awarded 11 BA degrees in 1978 but only one BA degree in 1983 (IU Folklore Institute, 1984c). The 1984 review committee hinted at the recent death of Richard Dorson as having a deleterious effect on the entire Folklore program. The department stated candidly, in their Folklore Institute Report (IU Folklore Institute, 1984b): "Our large introductory courses serve as our primary recruiting channel" (p. 107), but, because of "current job prospects for undergraduate liberal arts majors" (p. 107), no other active recruitment was being undertaken. Nevertheless, the Folklore faculty pledged commitment to their undergraduate majors, "regard[ing] a folklore BA as one of the more valuable liberal arts degrees for the understanding it gives of one's own and of other cultures" (p. 107). The authors of the report averred that even introductory folklore students were involved in "[p]lanning a research project, collecting data, and organizing information into a paper" (IU Folklore Institute, 1984b, p. 108). Such assertions reflect the learning outcome claims and teaching strategies of other folklore educators (Fish, 1984; Gabbert, 2010; Hirschi, 2001; Nicolaisen, 1984). A 1995-1996 departmental assessment committee sought IU institutional funds to conduct a survey of students in introductory folklore classes, in order to

> address in particular the effectiveness of the introductory classes in conveying a sense of the essential and characteristic new learning that can be associated with the discipline of folkloristics. This information is important because folklore is a discipline that few undergraduates will have been exposed to before coming to Indiana University. (Dolby, 1996)

Nevertheless, no sign of the proposed comprehensive survey appears to have been either devised or implemented by the 1996 assessment team, and to date no comprehensive assessment of the department's undergraduate program has been provided for public consumption. Through this

study of cultural knowledge learning outcomes in IUB folklore general education courses, I seek to examine, and to supply to a public audience, some corroboration of decades-old departmental claims of the benefits of the study of folklore for undergraduate students.

Scholarship on the Study of Folklore in Undergraduate General Education

In his first survey of undergraduate folklore programs, Baker (1971) declared the value of folklore for undergraduate general education, especially in helping to develop intercultural competence:

> Folklore aptly serves the ideals of liberal education; it provides a fresh understanding of man and society; it instills in students the desire and ability to solve problems on their own, it encourages students to appreciate and respect ethnic, religious, regional, and national differences. (p. 227)

Though Baker (1971, 1986) struck a hopeful note on the growth of folklore curriculum in American undergraduate education, folklore scholars admit that folklore in undergraduate general education has scarcely been researched (G. Hansen, personal communication, May 30, 2018; J. Rosenberg, personal communication, April 1, 2018). One reason for so little information may be the continued low profile of the study of folklore in undergraduate education: currently only 23 North American colleges and universities offer undergraduate folklore majors, minors, or concentrations (American Folklore Society, 2020), and of these 23 institutions, only three undergraduate degree programs exist in the United States: Harvard (Harvard University, 2018), IUB (IU, 2018e), and the University of Oregon (University of Oregon, 2018). The monograph *Teaching Folklore* (Jackson, 1984), while full of insights into the undergraduate folklore classroom, had a limited distribution, and therefore was barely remembered by those scholars who were aware of the book's existence (G. Hansen, personal communication, May 30, 2018).

Two studies demonstrate the state of scholarship on the study of folklore as part of an undergraduate general education: Hirschi (2001) and Gabbert (2010).

Voices on the value of studying folklore. Hirschi (2001), for her doctoral dissertation, examined the application of folklore approaches to teaching undergraduate English composition classes; in her literature review, the scholar indicated having found only folklore curriculum scholarship covering either K-12 education, or thematic units within semester-long college courses. Hirschi (2001) named English composition classes, the main gateway college course for nearly all students, as ideal spaces to build cultural bridges, both among students as well as between students and campus culture. Hirschi (2001) utilized two main data collection methods:

1. Interviews with five faculty members, four from Utah State University (USU), and one from the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, who all used folklore approaches in their English composition classes;
2. Document analysis of "386 student manuscripts housed in the Family Saga Collection in the Fife Folklore Archive at Utah State University" (p. iv).

In preparing her report, Hirschi (2001) provided insights into the status of the discipline of folklore within the academy. Though Hirschi (2001) stated that "folklore is relevant to the private and occupational lives we lead" (p. 18), she nevertheless found that faculty who use folklore processes in their classes hesitated to call their methods 'folklore' "for fear students would somehow consider [the] class frivolous" (p. 20). Hirschi (2001) noted that folklore, like multiculturalism, is "a late comer to the academy and therefore still suffers from a legitimacy crisis" (p. 24); the researcher noted that the field suffered from disdain and misunderstanding outside of the discipline, and shame within. Yet Hirschi (2001) resisted as groundless these negative attitudes toward folklore:

> The irony is that the skills taught in [folklore and multiculturalism]—communication, diversity, and independent inquiry—while often undervalued by the education community and society as a whole are in fact the skills employers want from our graduates. (p. 26)

Hirschi (2001) went on to list desired learning outcomes, from her practitioner informants, for using folklore approaches in English composition classes, spotlighting intercultural development, including:

- "'provides students with a better understanding of themselves and society'" (p. 42);
- "'a positive and supportive way of bringing ethnic heritage into the curriculum'" (p. 44);
- "'connects students to their 'history' and 'contemporary issues' at the same time'" (p. 44).

Hirschi (2001) pondered warnings of practitioners:

- to "'establish early on that folklore is a serious academic discipline'" (p. 45);
- to demonstrate the importance of "primary and secondary sources" (p. 48);
- to expect some resistance from students—both students of color as well as White students;
- and to promote dialogue and resist maintaining "unequal power relations among various social and cultural groups" (p. 57) in the classroom.

Hirschi (2001) painted a comprehensive picture of the setting into which she stepped to conduct her study.

While the centerpiece of Hirschi's (2001) dissertation encompassed the pedagogy of the English composition faculty, the most compelling reflections on the value of the folklore approach to English composition appeared in the researcher's review of the student manuscripts

of the Family Saga Collection. One of the USU faculty members regularly assigned a four-part Family Saga project to her freshmen composition students, including collection of oral family narratives; 15 years' worth of projects were published and archived by the university. Hirschi (2001) discovered through the students' cover essays that the project was an "overwhelmingly…positive experience for most of the students" (p. 128). Students mentioned using several data collection methods for their oral family narratives, including: document analysis of diaries, journals, and letters; interviews, whether in person or by phone; e-mail; and their own memories of family stories (Hirschi, 2001). Hirschi (2001) found multiple examples of students gaining a sense of family pride, as well as respect for family members and a feeling of connection between past and present—passing down "family traditions" (p. 130) proved important to student and informant alike. Hirschi (2001) attributed the lack of depth she found in the analysis section of the manuscripts to a lack of "exposure to a wider base of student writing" (p. 133), which she assumed would improve students' ability to put critical thinking into writing. Nevertheless, Hirschi (2001) gained access to a rare treasure trove of student voices revealing their own meaning-making of the learning they achieved through the study of folklore. In this present study, I seek a more direct connection to students' voices, through semi-structured interviews, in reflecting on their cultural knowledge learning through the study of folklore.

Overview of a folklore general education course in the 21st century. Gabbert (2010), in an article reminiscent of the detailed course descriptions provided in *Teaching Folklore* (Jackson, 1984), outlined her course plan for her Introduction to Folklore class at USU. Gabbert (2010), using her course as an example, declared ethnographic research of "local community life" (p. 37) to be commonly expected in undergraduate folklore classes "across the country" (p. 37), and valuable for "contribut[ing] to knowledge of contemporary social and cultural life" (p.

37). Gabbert's (2010) overview of the folklore curriculum at USU most likely also typifies the introduction to the study of folklore at other institutions:

> Folklore classes at Utah State fulfill the university's requirements for Breadth Humanities General Education. Students in these classes are usually freshmen or sophomores, have never before taken a folklore course, and frequently are unfamiliar with the humanities. These classes therefore provide opportunities for all students early in their college careers to conduct original research, whether or not they are students in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Such opportunities may not be offered elsewhere on campus. (p. 37)

Gabbert (2010) noted that, in conducting research in general education classes, not only do students get to connect abstract concepts to real life, but they also engage in an activity that should be intrinsically motivating to them: "Sending students out into the field also virtually assures that they will be interested in their subject matter since they document what interests them" (p. 38). This comment evokes Glynn, Aultman, and Owens's (2005) recommendation in motivating general education students to learn: "Give college students in general education programs some degree of control over what they are learning and how they learn it" (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005, p. 164).

Unlike in Spitzer's (2015) research report, Gabbert (2010) traced the steps along which she led students in acquiring knowledge of folklore theory as well as research techniques, in order to prepare the students to produce a reasonably high-quality research project. Since Gabbert (2010 taught at the same institution at which Hirschi (2001) conducted her study, Gabbert expressed familiarity with folklore archives; she recommended folklore archives of student research as important repositories for scholars to use to understand trends and practices

in social life. Gabbert (2010), in lamenting the lack of an undergraduate folklore degree program at USU, intimated that the few institutions housing undergraduate folklore degree programs should conduct research "to track students" (p. 41) in terms of assessing the "outcomes of undergraduates' folklore research" (p. 41), both through their undergraduate academic experiences as well as in their post-baccalaureate careers. Hirschi (2001) and Gabbert (2010) have thrown down the gauntlet for a full-fledged undergraduate folklore degree program to investigate the learning outcomes of their courses, beginning with the learning experiences of novice folklore general education students. In this present study, I invited undergraduate folklore general education students at IUB to reflect on how the study of folklore has affected their understanding of their own cultures and cultural communities, as well as their understanding of cultures different from their own. Such a study will represent the vanguard of research that not only examines the learning outcomes of an undergraduate folklore degree program, but that also includes undergraduate student voices in articulating the possible value of the study of folklore in an undergraduate general education curriculum.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this present study is to explore the promotion of intercultural competence in undergraduate students exposed to folklore general education courses, as articulated by the students themselves. Few studies have explored the study of folklore in undergraduate general education in the 21st century (Gabbert, 2010; Hirschi, 2001), and none have appeared involving institutions with undergraduate folklore degree programs. This chapter will begin with my epistemological perspective, research paradigm, and intended method of inquiry. The chapter will also include a discussion of the enacted research design, including the research setting, methods of data collection, and data analysis process. The chapter will conclude with considerations of trustworthiness and of my positionality as researcher.

Epistemology, Research Paradigm, and Method of Inquiry

This present study, founded on my life work of forging relationships with students—from high school applicants to university alumni—emerges from a particular ontological/epistemological perspective in ways of knowing that lead to studying people for the purpose of understanding how people make sense of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Thus my inquiry paradigm, or framework, derives from the ontological/epistemological perspective of social constructivism.

Social Constructivism

The inquiry paradigm of social constructivism, within the social sciences, rests on the ontology, or one's belief in the nature of reality, that reality is based on knowledge construction through social interactions, as individuals make meaning of their world and situation through reflection and dialogue, in finding solutions to social, economic, and political problems (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (2013) delineated that sense-making refers to "the

social world, rather than the natural world….the world created by and for humans interacting with other humans and other beings" (p. 46). Lincoln and Guba (2013) defined the unit of understanding reality as a construct, "a mental realization—'a making real'—of an apparently singular, unitary entity or relationship" (p. 47). Lincoln and Guba followed up with defining construction as "a coherent, articulated set of constructs—a pattern or web of constructs and their interconnections—that make sense of some aspect (some 'chunk') of the constructor's surround" (p. 47). Lincoln and Guba noted that while people naturally tend to want to harmonize all the constructs in their surroundings,

> Maturity, however, extends the ability of the individual to consider and, frequently, nonjudgmentally reflect upon constructions which others may hold, and which are at variance with his or her own….to hear and entertain constructions different from one's own beliefs, attitudes, and values." (pp. 49-50)

The concept of maturing in knowledge construction corresponds with the strategies of intercultural maturity and intercultural development devised by King and Baxter Magolda (2005). In this present study, I seek to explore whether or not exposure to the study of folklore moves undergraduate students towards greater cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development in acknowledging, understanding, and accepting cultural knowledge as constructed "from personal experience, evidence from other sources, and others' experiences" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576).

Social constructivism, as a framework for social science research, presumes a relationship exists between a researcher, or inquirer, and those people being studied, or knowers. The social constructivist's epistemology, or inquirer/knower relationship, involves a partnership of meaning making: participant voices coming through as clearly as possible through dialogue

with the researcher, and the researcher exercising reflexivity of her own worldview, as she goes through the inquiry process, including interviews, transcription, observation, analysis, and reporting (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (2013) illustrated that the representation of any construction privileges the voice of the inquirer; therefore, the inquirer must diligently pursue reflexivity and transparency, as well as join participants in admitting their initial positions and in reflecting on their growth as well as on their tolerance of the other's constructs.

In this present study, I seek to investigate the meaning students make of their learning experiences in folklore general education classes, specifically knowledge about their own cultures and knowledge about cultures different from their own. I acknowledge my position as undergraduate folklore advisor, and in having obtained positive results in intercultural competency through a pilot project in 2017. In this previous qualitative research project, I investigated students' perceptions of the study of folklore, as first-time folklore students in an upper-level summer folklore class. The students' responses to my interview questions indicated to me that the students had discovered both enjoyment and usefulness in the study of folklore. Nevertheless, I will endeavor, in this present study, to keep my positionality from inhibiting my expectations of the participants' statements, primarily through self-reflexivity. The students' reflections—whether positive or negative—will be prompted by dialogue with me as the researcher, for the purpose of determining the usefulness of folklore general education classes for promoting intercultural competence in undergraduate students. This type of social science research falls into the methodological category of qualitative research, as opposed to more measurement-based, or quantitative, research.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodology focuses on studying people's lived experiences (Yin, 2016). As noted by Yin (2016), people, in real life, do not resemble answers on questionnaires, or lab settings, or statistics. Unlike the "scientifically-based research movement" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6), in which experiments are devised to relate variables and determine causes, qualitative research emphasizes context and overarching concepts to gain new insights on social behavior (Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) listed five features of qualitative research:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, in their real-world roles;
2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people [or participants] in a study;
3. Explicitly attending to and accounting for real-world contextual conditions;
4. Contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help to *explain* social behavior and thinking;
5. Acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. (p. 9)

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) declared the primary difference between quantitative and qualitative research stemming from the "*positive and postpositive traditions in the physical and social sciences*" (p. 8, emphasis in original). While the positive ontological tradition insists on an objective reality waiting to be studied, the postpositive ontological tradition "relies on multiple methods as a way of capturing as much of reality as possible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). Qualitative research derives reality from multiple data sources, theoretical perspectives, and participant and researcher voices.

Yin (2016) described qualitative research as craft, constituting original research "of your own making, using your own ideas, words, and data…a study that has not been done before" (p. 13). Through this present study, I seek to uncover student reflections on learning outcomes in

folklore general education classes that have not yet been articulated in higher education literature. Yin (2016) specified three objectives of research as craft:

1. Transparency—making data as accessible and reviewable as possible;
2. "Methodic-ness" (p. 14)—"following some orderly set of research procedures and minimizing whimsical or careless work" (p. 14);
3. Evidence-based—"to ground qualitative research on an explicit body of evidence" (p. 14), getting the "actual language" (p. 14) of the participants as they provide their lived experiences, "as the representation of reality" (p. 14).

In this present research study, I plan to use not only multiple sources of evidence—document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews—but also qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, not only to organize, transcribe, and analyze data, but also "to enable greater *researcher reflexivity* [and] *transparency of research decisions*" (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014, p. 5, emphasis in original). My primary data source, individual interviews, will be analyzed as part of narrative inquiry, a method of qualitative research based on making meaning of people's stories.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry, or narrative research, consists of collecting data that produces or includes stories in order to analyze those stories, "trying to categorize or interpret" those stories (Squire, Davis, Esin, Andrews, Harrison, Hydén, & Hydén, 2014, p. 7). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) declared that, in narrative inquiry, "*the person* is the context of prime interest" (p. 32, emphasis in original); in other words, both researcher and research participants are "embodiments of lived stories" (p. 43), and therefore the narratives of researcher and research participants must be negotiated throughout their interaction. The most common form of social

narrative studied has been "spoken narrative" (Squire *et al.*, 2014, p. 10), usually collected via recordings as interviews and then transcribed. Squire *et al.* (2014) preferred to think of 'story' and 'narrative' interchangeably: though the two terms have been differentiated by scholars, in considering stories of lesser interest and more individually constructed and idiosyncratic than narratives, Squire and associates believed that the content-related aspects of narratives, with the "structure [and] context" (p. 25) of stories, work in tandem, and cannot be easily divided.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) admitted that narrative inquiry thinking consists of messy complexity. As Squire *et al* (2014) referred to narratives as possessing "multiple meanings,…subjectivities" (pp. 16-17), and temporal dimensions, so Clandinin and Connelly (2000) illustrated the "metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*" (p. 50, emphasis in original) as "*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation)" (p. 50, emphasis in original). This depiction of narrative inquiry reflects the co-construction of reality not only by researcher and participant, but also by the researcher as narrator, the researcher's audience, and the researcher's medium (Squire *et al.*, 2014). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that "[t]he contribution of a narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to the knowledge of the field" (p. 42). Nevertheless, Squire *et al.* (2014) offered at least one contribution of narrative inquiry to increase knowledge creation:

> Narrative's function as a window onto a particular socio-historical movement, and a way of understanding that movement's meaning for the narrator, is, then, the first formulation of the connection between stories and their wider contexts that we will consider. (pp. 84-85)

This statement expresses one of the goals of the present research study, as I consider undergraduate narratives of exposure to folklore general education classes, in the wider context of the status of culture studies in early 21st-century undergraduate education. My epistemological stance of social constructivism fits with the methodology of narrative inquiry, in that narrative inquiry depends on the construction of knowledge and meaning, of reality, through the social interaction of researcher and participant in producing, including, and analyzing stories of lived experience. While I considered collective narratives in reporting my findings more easily inclusive of all student participants' voices for fleshing out themes, I found narrative inquiry particularly helpful in interpreting individual student participants' reflections vis-à-vis the conceptual framework of intercultural maturity.

Design of Study

In exploring students' perceptions of intercultural competence gained from folklore general education classes, this section outlines the research setting, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies for this proposed study. The study was designed to focus on examining the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, if at all?
2. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of cultures different from their own, if at all?
3. How do students articulate any usefulness of the cultural knowledge gained in a folklore general education class?

Research Setting: The Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at IUB

The BA degree program in folklore at IUB has not only persisted, but expanded, in the last 20 years. In 2000, the Folklore Institute joined with the Ethnomusicology Institute to form the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology (FOLK/ETHNO) (IU, 2018a). Though undergraduate majors were able to include both folklore and ethnomusicology courses in their BA degree plans, the Folklore BA did not officially become the Folklore and Ethnomusicology BA until 2010 (K. Flanigan, personal communication, August 7, 2018). The department has awarded an average of 9-10 FOLK/ETHNO BA degrees each year from 2013 through 2020, and currently lists 30 active BA major students and 38 active undergraduate minor students (IU, 2021a). As the department's undergraduate academic advisor for the last 13 years, I have observed that, of the 10 courses currently required in the FOLK/ETHNO BA major, most majors enroll in an average of 3-4 FOLK/ETHNO general education courses as part of their degree.

With the longevity of over seven decades of undergraduate education (IU Folklore Institute, n.d.), the study of folklore at IUB continues to provide attractive course offerings to undergraduate students, in the 21st century. Among the department's FOLK/ETHNO general education course offerings each semester, an average of 5-6 general education courses have featured specifically folklore topics, over the last 10 years (IU, 2018d). The sustained enrollment success of these folklore classes indicates their continued popularity among undergraduate students for fulfilling IUB General Education Breadth of Inquiry in Arts and Humanities and in Social and Historical Sciences (IU, 2018a). Nevertheless, a study of the student learning outcomes of intercultural competence in IUB folklore general education courses would allow educators to discover some of the developmental, professional, and societal value of the study of folklore for undergraduate students.

Through the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, folklore general education courses at IUB comprised the sites for data collection. Folklore general education courses include both large survey class settings as well as smaller seminar class settings. Folklore general education courses of fall 2019 provided the class syllabi to analyze, classroom settings to observe, and participants to interview.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

As multiple sources of evidence strengthen the credibility of a qualitative research study (Tracy, 2010), this present study not only features interviews of folklore general education students, but will also includes document analysis and classroom observations to provide context for the participant narratives. In addition, my use of the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA helped not only to enhance the rigor of the study, in "care and practice of data collection and analysis procedures" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841), but also the sincerity, or trustworthiness, of the study, including "self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing" (Tracy, p. 841).

Document analysis of syllabi. In September and October 2019, I requested current syllabi from six faculty members teaching fall 2019 folklore general education classes. I analyzed the content of these six syllabi, in order to inform me of the aspects of culture and social groups intended to be prominently featured in each class, to aid me in scheduling class observation visits, and to familiarize me with class assignments to which student interview participants might refer.

Observations of folklore general education classes. In September and October 2019, I made one visit to the lecture section of each of the six folklore general education classes for which I had analyzed syllabi. I gained classroom access through each course instructor, via e-

mail, and took handwritten notes primarily on the content of the lectures. In placing myself in the classroom, I sought to put myself in the seat of a student, unfamiliar with the particular material. In field observation, I am aware that I, as the researcher, am the "**main research instrument**" (Yin, 2016, p. 130, emphasis in original), and that field research requires acute self-awareness of my "potential biases and idiosyncrasies….personal background…motives for doing research, and…categories or filters that might influence…understanding of field events and actions" (Yin, 2016, p. 130). As with the class syllabi, the class observations introduced me to some of the course material, providing more context for class assignments, activities, and topics to which student interview participants might refer in interviews. I regret my limitation of only having made one visit to each lecture; I believe having added at least one more visit to each class would have enriched my ability to connect student participants' stories to course content. I took my handwritten document analysis notes and class observation field notes and typed them into the document browser of MAXQDA, as a form of "preliminary analysis" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 56), as I contemplated the cultural knowledge and skills that students are intended to gain from these folklore general education classes.

Interviews of class participants. In January and February 2020, I conducted separate interviews with 22 undergraduate students who had attended and completed their first folklore general education classes at IUB in fall 2019. These student participants represented five of the six fall 2019 folklore general education classes observed, as no student from the sixth class completed the initial contact protocol with me, the researcher. With each student participant, I used the same interview protocol (see Appendix A). Interviews ranged in length from 12.01 minutes to 53.49 minutes, with an average length of 26.74 minutes. Even though I, as the interviewer, grew more comfortable, with each interview, in asking probing questions without

leading the discussion, I believe the brevity of some interviews may have been due to a combination of students' more reserved personalities, the relatively formal setting of the interview—my professional advising office—and the students' perception of my position as an older African American female researcher. Nevertheless, I found each student participant's account of learning to be revelatory.

I admit that this small purposive sample represents limitations, particularly since I depended on students voluntarily contacting me, in response to their instructors' invitations, and allowing me to view their academic records in order to ascertain that they were indeed enrolled in their first folklore classes. While 34 students initially responded to the invitation to participate in my study, a dozen of these students did not follow through on scheduling and attending an interview. I kept in mind Yin's (2016) assertion that a qualitative research sample including between 25 and 50 instances for a topic of moderate complexity, as mine is, should provide me with an adequate amount of information to "*the point of redundancy*" (Yin, 2016, p. 98, emphasis in original); 22 students was as close as I could get to that goal. While I do not have easy access to race and gender demographics of folklore general education classes, I am well-acquainted with the race and gender makeup of FOLK/ETHNO majors from 2008 through 2020, a population usually gleaned from folklore general education classes. Although I understand that the terms "sex" and "gender" are not the same, throughout this study, I use the word "gender" here to denote "sex," to match the terminology offered in the IUB website when discussing male and female students (IUB, 2021c). While the department's 124 BA graduates, from 2008 through 2020, is 93% White and 60% female (IU, 2021a), the demographics of the student participants in my study were 82% White and 82% female. Therefore, I acknowledge that student of color and female students are overrepresented in my present study's sample, at least in

comparison to the makeup of FOLK/ETHNO majors. Nonetheless, I hope to present my findings in ways that truthfully represent student participants' perceptions of cultural knowledge learning outcomes in the folklore general education classes they attended in fall 2019.

Upon conclusion of the fall 2019 semester, I scheduled and digitally recorded semi-structured interviews with each student, using an interview protocol (see Appendix A) designed to discover how the students and the researcher together construct meaning (Roulston, 2010) of the students' intercultural competence learning experiences in folklore general education classes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, or word for word, following Yin's (2016) injunction that "a continuing focus on capturing words verbatim eventually helps to give you insight into the meaning of the interviewee's thoughts, rather than your inferred meaning" (p. 166). I used MAXQDA software to produce transcripts that are synchronized with the audio recording, using digital time stamps (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014). These software capabilities allowed me to stay close to the data during the analysis and writing phases of the research process.

Data Analysis Process

The transcribed interview data was analyzed using narrative thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing [sic] and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Squire *et al*. (2014) further clarified the utility of narrative thematic analysis: "Narrative thematic analysis focuses on themes that develop across stories, rather than just on themes that can be picked out of stories" (p. 9). Braun and Clarke (2006) offered five steps of thematic analysis:

1. "Familiarizing yourself with your data" (p. 87);
2. "generating initial code" (p. 88);
3. "searching for themes" (p. 89)

4. "reviewing themes" (p. 91);
5. "defining and naming themes" (p. 92).

I attempted to follow the steps of thematic analysis, also keeping in mind the following coding techniques provided by Emerson *et al.* (2011) as well as Saldaña (2013).

Coding techniques. Braun and Clarke (2006), Emerson *et al.* (2011), Saldaña (2013), and Yin (2016) all provided useful perspectives for examining my interview data. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined a code as:

> a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.'" (p. 88)

Yin (2016) described codes as "the smallest or lowest entities, or recorded elements resulting from some experience, observation, experiment, or other similar situation" (p. 138). Saldaña (2013) defined coding as "a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or 'families' because they share some characteristic—the beginning of a pattern" (p. 8). Saldaña (2013) explained patterns as being distinguished by similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation (p. 6). Echoing Braun and Clarke's (2006) first two phases of thematic analysis, Emerson *et al.* (2011) recommended a three-step process for coding the data:

1. Read all the interview transcripts "as a complete corpus" (p. 171).
2. Open coding, "read[ing]…notes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate" (p. 172).
3. Focused coding, "subject[ing]…notes to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as being of particular interest" (p. 172).

Using MAXQDA, I did my best to approach the data inductively, described by Braun and Clarke (2006), as "a process of coding the data *without* trying to fit into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions…data driven" (p. 83, emphasis in original). In doing so, I hoped to allow for patterns of student reflections on intercultural competence to emerge from the data.

MAXQDA and data analysis support. I have purchased a license to use the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called MAXQDA. CAQDAS programs were first created in the 1980s by individual qualitative researchers seeking ways to "facilitate the analysis of their own qualitative data" (Gilbert, Jackson, & di Gregorio, 2014, p. 226). Gilbert *et al.* (2014) explained that as researchers began to agree on what CAQDAS should be able to do, the number of different software programs decreased, while the most dominant programs, including ATLAS.ti, NVivo, and MAXQDA became more standardized. While Gilbert *et al.* (2014) referred to CAQDAS as toolboxes, Paulus (2018) dubbed such programs "a textual laboratory to organize, store, and manage data sources" (p. 2). Gilbert *et al.* (2014) listed "the four broad activities of the qualitative analysis process" (p. 224), for which CAQDAS was designed to be most useful:

1. Organizing data, including grouping and connecting data;
2. Exploring the data, or familiarizing oneself with the data;
3. Interpreting and reflecting on the data, including memo writing and drawing diagrams and images;
4. Integrating the data, both within the study as well as with other studies.

Paulus, Lester, and Britt (2013), speaking for qualitative researchers who use CAQDAS for research support, insisted that, unlike quantitative research, "*qualitative* data analysis software

does not actually do the analysis for you" (p. 644, emphasis in original). Instead, CAQDAS can support the qualitative research analysis activities, as well as "provide access to the data in ways that stimulate new ideas" (Gilbert *et al.*, 2014, p. 225). With some practice, I availed myself of MAXQDA's organizational and analysis features.

For this present research study, I stored all interview data—including audio files, synchronized with transcripts, and interview protocols—document analysis notes, and classroom observation field notes, in MAXQDA, on a privately owned, password-protected laptop computer. Backup files of transcripts were kept on USB drives in a lockable home file cabinet. Having all the data in one digital location, I used MAXQDA's memoing features while familiarizing myself with the data, a digital analogy to post-it notes, to capture ideas related to student intercultural competence learning outcomes. During the labor-intensive process of coding, I relied on MAXQDA's aid in creating and assigning codes, retrieving all data with the same code, and viewing coded segments in context (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014). I used the software's querying and visualization tools, to visually portray "connections among codes" (Oswald, 2017, p. 5), and "to find relationships and patterns between key attributes of the data" (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014, p. 130). Granted, I kept in mind some of the challenges in using a CAQDAS program, as described by Gilbert *et al.* (2014), including the propensity to overcode the data, and the learning curve of understanding how to implement effective queries. Nevertheless, having experienced the manual coding and category building in the 2017 pilot qualitative research project described earlier, I enjoyed and appreciated the facilitation of the qualitative data analysis process using MAXQDA software, particularly in discovering and connecting narrative themes across student reflections on intercultural competence learning outcomes through folklore general education classes.

In reading each interview "line-by-line" (Emerson *et al.*, 2011, p. 171), I initially came up with a total of over 1,600 coded segments of data, elements of what student participants said that could be "assessed in a meaningful way" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 88). I gathered these segments under 11 color-coded categories holding a total of 816 codes and subcodes. As I used MAXQDA to link overlapping, nested, and nearby codes, I made notes to myself using the software's memoing feature, and began to consolidate related codes. Combining my memos into one document, I read through the document and recognized a pattern forming around three broad themes:

1. Defining folk or social groups;
2. Discovering the power of stories, urban legends, and "hidden history";
3. Applying cultural learning to own daily life and career goals.

I found that these themes not only connected the coded segments, but also allowed for the richest illustrations of student participants' perceptions of cultural knowledge and skills gained through their folklore general education classes.

Trustworthiness

In endeavoring to represent, as closely as possible, the meaning, created together by student participants and researcher, of the students' learning experiences surrounding intercultural competence, I hoped to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the data through transparency in presenting the qualitative research process. Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) provided several suggestions in promoting "analytic openness on the grounds of refutability and freedom from bias" (p. 28). Anfara *et al.* made several recommendations for demonstrating "the accountability of the researcher in documenting the actions associated with establishing internal

validity (triangulation), theme development, and the relationship between research questions and data sources" (p. 33). I contemplated implementation of some of Anfara *et al.*'s (2002) recommendations for transparency, including:

- Maintaining synchronized audio files with time-stamped interview transcripts, in MAXQDA;
- Presenting triangulation of document analysis and class observation notes with interview data;
- Including complete interview protocols in the research report.

As Anfara *et al.* (2002) suggested, I desire for readers to give credence to the present study by clear exhibition of the research process.

As a corollary to trustworthiness, I aspired to execute research of "high quality" (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). Tracy (2010) recommended eight criteria for qualitative research that would not only gain respect from powerful external stakeholders, but also "promote dialogue amongst qualitative scholars from different paradigms" (p. 838). Listed below are Tracy's (2010) criteria, with my intended strategies for meeting such guidelines in this present study.

1. *Worthy topic*: Tracy (2010) averred that "[g]ood qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative" (p. 840). Through examining the learning outcomes faculty members formulate in their folklore general education syllabi, the content discussed in folklore general education class observations, and the student reflections expressed in interviews, I hoped to examine the usefulness of studying folklore, as an example of cultural studies, in helping students develop intercultural competence. The topic is timely, in that not only has general education gained greater prominence in 21st-century higher education (AAC&U, 2007), but also that intercultural competence as a

learning outcome has gained greater salience in a technologically and globally connected society (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015).

2. *Rich rigor*: Tracy (2010) defined richness as having a variety "of theoretical constructs, data sources, contexts, and samples" (p. 841), and rigor as including wise choices of samples, type, and amount of data, "care and practice of data collection and analysis procedures" (p. 841). With a purposive sample of 22 first-time folklore general education students, I intend to present a variety of experiences of folklore education, from the participants' personal points of view, with as little confounding material as possible, given the students' novice status in the study of folklore. Storing, organizing, and interrogating the data sources in MAXQDA also enabled me to more effectively manage the complexity of the data sets (Gilbert *et al.*, 2014).
3. *Credibility*: Tracy's (2010) practices to promote credibility echo Anfara *et al.*'s (2002) recommendations for transparency, including "thick description, triangulation or crystallization, and multivocality and partiality" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). In using MAXQDA software to produce verbatim interview transcripts synchronized with audio files, I analyzed the students' narratives for both individual statements related to intercultural learning outcomes, as well as noting similarities and differences among participants' narratives. In representing participants' meaning making as faithfully as possible, I aimed to introduce the complexity of helping undergraduate students to gain intercultural knowledge and skills.
4. *Resonance*: Tracy (2010) defined resonance as "research's ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience…achieved through aesthetic merit, evocative writing, and formal generalizations" (p. 844). I will endeavor to demonstrate the study's value

"across a variety of contexts or situations" (Tracy, 2010, p. 845), by telling the students' reflections on exposure to folklore general education classes in a way that helps readers relate the research findings to personally familiar situations, including learning settings in other humanities and social science disciplines.

5. *Significant Contribution*: as outlined by Tracy (2010), in using interview data to explore general education learning outcomes, I hope to add to the survey findings of Glynn, Aultman, and Owens (2005) and Miller and Sundre (2008), to "[provide] new conceptual understandings that can be used by future researchers" (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). I hope to demonstrate that my methodology not only provides new insights into the usefulness of folklore general education courses for developing intercultural competence in undergraduate students, but that also offers application for uncovering the learning outcomes of other humanities and social science disciplines.
6. *Ethics*: In this present study, I followed procedural guidelines of ethical research as required at IUB. Such ethical steps include voluntary participation, and confidentiality. I used pseudonyms for all participants. In storing audio files and transcripts of interview data, I used a privately owned, password-protected laptop computer, with backup files on USB devices kept under lock and key. In using digital tools, I am mindful that the safety and concerns of the student participants prevails in educational research (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). In addition, as recommended by Tracy (2010), I tried to practice relational ethics, respecting student participants and representing their viewpoints truthfully.
7. *Meaningful Coherence*: Tracy (2010) described meaningfully coherent studies as studies that "eloquently interconnect their research design, data collection, and analysis with

their theoretical framework and situational goals" (p. 848). Using the research questions to focus interview protocols and analysis of class syllabi, class observation field notes, and especially interview data, I aspired to link the student participants' meaning making of learning about their own cultures as well as others' cultures, with the usefulness and goals of general education and of intercultural competence in a technologically and globally connected society.

8. *Sincerity*: Tracy (2010) outlined sincerity in qualitative research as being composed of "self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing" (p. 841). In this present study, I observed the fall 2019 folklore general education classes, and interviewed fall 2019 student participants in spring 2020, allowing the students some distance in order to reflect on their learning from those courses. I used MAXQDA software to accrete a data audit trail, as well as to create reflexive memos on my own positionality, in the choices made throughout the research process.

Positionality

I understand that my vocation, values, and worldview colored both my interactions with student participants, as well as my interpretation of findings and themes. Peshkin (1988) warned researchers to "beware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes" (p. 17). As a long-time undergraduate academic advisor in the IUB Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, as well as a doctoral minor student in Folklore, I realize that I carry a marked bias towards the usefulness of the study of folklore. As Peshkin (1988) examined his own feelings, and identified several types of subjectivity within himself, so I have recognized three "'Subjective I's'" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18) of my own: 'Anal-Student I,' 'Advisor-Mom I,' and 'Humanities-Crusader I.' In class observations, and particularly in interviewing student

participants, I am aware of the necessity of tempering my advocacy for culture studies, and of folklore specifically, with acceptance of the students' points of view, whether negatively or positively disposed to the study of folklore.

I have become convinced of the necessity of considering my positionality throughout the research process. As suggested by Watt (2007), I kept a traditional, pen-and-paper research journal, to promote my own reflexivity in the research process. In experimenting with MAXQDA, I also produced reflexive memos embedded in the digital data files, particularly for contemplating the ethics of representing my participants, and interpreting their statements from interview data. With such "internal dialogue" (Squire *et al*, 2014, p. 30), I have aspired to Squire *et al*'s (2014) recommendations for narrative inquiry: "the closest a researcher can come to uncovering truth is to take full account of the positioning not only of others, but of themselves as well" (p. 109). As Peshkin (1988) stated: "By this consciousness I can possibly escape the thwarting biases that subjectivity engenders, while attaining the singular perspective its special persuasions promise" (p. 21). I hope to persuade my audience, through transparent and reflexive organizing, managing, analyzing, and representing the data, of the value and usefulness of the study of folklore, as an example of cultural studies, in developing intercultural competence in undergraduate students.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to examine the statements of undergraduate students, as they reflect upon and articulate their perceptions of cultural knowledge, understanding, and skills gained from folklore general education classes. In the first three chapters of this dissertation, I:

- introduced the need for student voices in the articulation of cultural knowledge learning outcomes, in an undergraduate general education;
- reviewed the literature outlining American undergraduate general education, cultural knowledge learning outcomes within undergraduate education, and the academic discipline of folklore as a purported purveyor of cultural knowledge;
- and provided the methodological design used for this study, including qualitative research inquiry methods and data analysis, tools, and processes.

In this chapter, I will present the findings that emerged from the data collected in: document analysis of the syllabi of six fall 2019 folklore general education classes conducted at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB)—hereafter referred to as Documents 1 through 6, in the order in which I reviewed the syllabi; class observation notes from one visit to each of those same six classes—hereafter referred to as Class Observation Notes 1 through 6, corresponding to the syllabi for those classes; and the transcripts from semi-structured interviews with 22 student participants who had attended at least one of those classes. Though student participants represent only five of the six fall 2019 folklore general education classes comprising this study's research sites, the document analysis of syllabi and class visit notes for all six classes help flesh out the alignment of designated class learning outcomes with student participants' perceptions of cultural learning. The data were analyzed using narrative thematic analysis, to uncover the

themes that developed across the students' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Squire, Davis, Esin, Andrews, Harrison, Hydén & Hydén, 2014).

Though I transcribed each interview verbatim, in my findings I substituted ellipses for some instances of filler words, such as "um" and "like," as well as for my verbal interjections, to attempt to unclutter the students' statements. Pseudonyms for the students were created to help keep participants' identities confidential. In addition, the specific courses the students attended will also not be named, to further protect the participants' identities. Notwithstanding these procedures, each student participant will be introduced, with general demographic information and reason for enrolling in a folklore class, as well as major and career choice information offered during the interview, in order to distinguish students' voices in the narrative of the themes. All findings served to answer the following research questions for this study:

1. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, if at all?
2. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of cultures different from their own, if at all?
3. How do students articulate any usefulness of the cultural knowledge gained in a folklore general education class?

In analyzing the data, three main themes developed across the students' stories, echoed in the syllabi and the class observation notes, that will illustrate and illuminate the students' perceptions of their cultural knowledge gains through folklore general education classes:

1. Defining folk or social groups;
2. Discovering the power of stories, urban legends, and "hidden history";
3. Applying cultural learning to own daily life and career goals.

Themes 1 and 2 make sense to me, since these reflect the base of the study of folklore, as noted in Chapter 2: the people studied—folk—and their creative expression—lore. Theme 3 reveals perceptions of learning outcomes that students articulated as desiring to use in the present and the future. Upon close reading of the interview data, I discovered no narratives that contradicted or negated these themes.

Student Participants

The following table introduces the 22 student interview participants, listed in order alphabetically by pseudonym.

Table 1

Student Participants

Student	Demographic Information	Student Status	Reason for Enrolling in Folklore Class	Major Choice; Career Goals
AA	White American female	Upperclassman self-described as non-traditional student, older than many of her classmates	Course description "enticing" (personal communication, February 3, 2020)	Psychology; clinical psychologist
AM	White American female	First-year student from northern Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded interesting	Originally, Education, now Journalism; either law school to study media law, or graduate school to study media policy
BB	White American female	First-year student	Interested in cryptids—legendary creatures—hoped to learn more about them	Interior Design; pairing interior design with becoming a realtor
BL	White American female	First-year student, from Indiana	Found on list of classes for New	Media; media editing and post-production

BY	White American male	Underclassman, from Indianapolis, IN	Student Orientation (NSO), sounded interesting Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded like fun	Media; media production
CC	White American female	First-year student	Fulfill gen ed requirements, close to student's interest in mythology and "history of things" (personal communication, February 7, 2020)	Speech and Hearing Sciences; speech language pathologist or audiologist
CK	White American female	Upperclassman	Topic coincided with honors thesis research	Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and Spanish; law school
DD	White American female	Second-year student, from Wisconsin	Fulfill gen ed requirements, fit student's schedule	Computer Science; software engineer
DJ	White American female	First-year student, from Tennessee	Fulfill gen ed requirements, instructor had good reviews on rating websites	Business; finance
EI	White American female	First-year student, from Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, hoped to learn about "cool stories" (personal communication, January 28, 2020)	Environmental Science; public sector, NOT oil or mining companies
FH	White American female	Upperclassman, from Fishers, Indiana; transfer student after two	Fulfill gen ed requirements, encouraged by NSO advisor for fun and interest	Psychology; either clinical psychology, mental health, or creative advertising

		years at university in US West		
GT	South Asian American female	First-year student, from Illinois	Fulfill gen ed requirements, consulted NSO advisors, sounded interesting	Business; either financial advising or real estate management
NZ	White American female	First-year student	Interest in stories and mythology, encouraged by NSO advisor	Exploratory; no career plans yet
OY	White American male	Upperclassman, from Indiana	Friend interested in enrolling, sounded like fun	Media; student affairs professional in higher education
PX	South Asian American female	First-year student, from Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, instructor recommended by friends	Biochemistry; doctor, perhaps orthopedic surgeon
QW	White American female	First-year student, from Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, course description sounded "awesome" (personal communication, January 27, 2020)	Animal Behavior; work with wildlife, specifically birds
RV	White American female	First-year student	Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded like fun	Education; junior high school math teacher
SU	White American male	First-year student	Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded interesting	Business; finance
WW	White American female	First-year student, from Indiana	Interested in "horror and spooky stuff" (personal	Originally Astrophysics major with Linguistics minor; now double major Linguistics and

			communication, February 7, 2020)	Folklore and Ethnomusicology (FOLK/ETHNO); linguistics professor
YY	African American male	First-year student, from Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded interesting	Exercise Science; physician's assistant
ZA	White American female	First-year student, from Carmel, Indiana	Fulfill gen ed requirements, sounded easy	Speech and Hearing Science; speech language pathologist or audiologist
ZZ	Hispanic American female	First-year student, from northwest Indiana	Fascinated with learning cultural aspects of death	Criminal Justice and Political Science; no career plans yet

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, in comparing this purposive sample to graduated FOLK/ETHNO majors, the overall representation of students roughly matches the makeup of folklore students, as the majority of students who end up majoring in folklore at IUB are White and female, using the racial and gender terms that appear in IUB student demographic statistics (IUB, 2021b; IUB, 2021c). In allowing student participants to expand on the first two main themes connecting their narratives, I will organize their statements by how each theme relates to the students' understanding of other cultures, and then by students' understanding of themselves and their own cultures. I will also weave in and provide examples of students' articulation of usefulness of cultural knowledge gained through their folklore general education classes, including their ability to use new vocabulary to describe social processes. I will try to concentrate on stories that display triangulation of sources: folklore research, class syllabi, class observation notes, and students' voices. I will conclude this chapter with a section on the third main theme, in which the students more explicitly applied their new cultural knowledge to their

current studies and career plans. At the beginning of each thematic section, I will discuss how the syllabus analyses and the class observation notes denote each theme.

Theme 1: Defining Folk or Social Groups

The theme of defining folk or social groups comprised not only a major topic of conversation among the student participants of this study, but also appeared in several of the syllabi and class observation notes. Nearly all of the syllabi delineated lessons about specific ethnic and cultural groups: Latinx communities (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 4, reviewed September 24, 2019); Middle Eastern and Asian communities in the United States (US) (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019); US Southern cultural groups (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019); Native American traditions (Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019); religious sects (Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019). Several syllabi also mentioned studying cross-cultural comparisons of cultural practices: language, jokes, and stories (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 4, reviewed September 24, 2019); foodways (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019); forms of commemoration (Document 3, reviewed September 23, 2019); dress and costume (Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019); health systems and beliefs (Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019). Class syllabi purport learning outcomes that include students contemplating their own social group traditions (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019), as well as the traditions of groups different from their own (Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019; Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019). The syllabi of these folklore general education classes point to the differences among groups of people in a variety of traditions and practices.

Class observation notes provided an in-depth look at some of these group delineations. For example, Class Observation Notes 1 (collected September 23, 2019) described differences in

meanings of American urban legends based on the racial identity of different groups. Class Observation Notes 4 (collected September 25, 2019) recorded an overview of ritual practices across disparate multiethnic and Latinx communities in the US and the Caribbean. Class Observation Notes 6 (collected October 24, 2019) caromed across continents in the discussion of cultural differences in contamination rumors and legends. In analyzing class syllabi and listening to class lectures, the theme of defining folk or social groups emerged as a major learning objective of folklore general education classes.

Two-thirds of the student participants contributed comments on their new knowledge concerning the definition and understanding of folk or social groups. Most of these comments were in response to the interview question asking them to describe a social group that they heard about in class that was new to them. In answer to that question, students also discussed social groups that they were aware of, but that they realized they knew less about than they had assumed. I believe this is why folk groups in the US emerged so often in the student participants' stories. Some of the student participants supplied pithy definitions of the term *folk or social group*—a novel concept to nearly all of the student participants—while others pondered a more holistic grasp of the concept. Student NZ referred to folk or social groups as "mini-subsets of culture" and elaborated further: "it's anything that kind of, I think, ties people together by having some shared something, whether it's…the same way of making friendship bracelets, or…the same jokes in the group that they came from" (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Student WW provided more than one description of social group:

> [L]ike people…find each other….culture isn't just something shared by, like, specific little sections, but…anything that anyone has in common puts them in a different group

> than someone else, and in the same group as someone else. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Student FH was struck by the concept of individual and group identity depending on the setting and situation. She expressed insight into the fluidity of labelling individuals and groups:

> I think understanding, like, a cultural setting of…certain groups, really comes down to understanding the…individual, because not everyone is universal, not everyone identifies with the same thing, and to ignore that is not a good thing….understanding, like, other social groups and stuff, is really just understanding…what identity they're enacting. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Student PX also spoke of the emphasis in class on the "big picture" (personal communication, January 24, 2020), insisting that observers of another culture need to be "more mindful" not to "jump to conclusions about people," based on one thing known about them. Student PX explained how focusing on the big picture shaped her thinking about the cultures of social groups, as she discussed cultural practice:

> [T]here's not just like one thing that defines us…just 'cause you see someone doing something, or doing it in a different way than you would have done it, doesn't necessarily mean that, like, they're automatically in a certain social group, it could be that they're in the exact opposite social group, but they were trying that for the first time. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student participants wrestled with understanding the tension between individual and group identities, as they described learning about social groups that were new to them, in their folklore general education classes.

Defining Newly Discovered Social Groups

Culture of the Gullah Geechee people. Some student participants recounted learning of social groups within the US, of whose existence they had previously been unaware. Several folklore general education class syllabi discussed pluralistic US society (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 4, reviewed September 24, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2020). Students CC, FH, and GT all admitted that their introduction to the Gullah Geechee people of "South Carolina" (Student FH, personal communication, January 30, 2020) was "eye-opening" (Student CC, personal communication, February 7, 2020; Student FH, personal communication, January 30, 2020), a group of people they had not "expected to hear about" (Student GT, personal communication, January 31, 2020). These students seemed astounded to discover a group of people so different from any they had encountered, in their own country.

In reflecting on what they remembered learning about the Gullah Geechee people, these students recalled the stories of a guest lecturer, "a PhD student" (Student FH, personal communication, January 30, 2020) who brought a slide show and videos. Student GT related the Gullah Geechee people to lost land and culture: "as they were losing their land, they lost their culture…and that kind of…related to…Native Americans, 'cause…they're also losing their land" (Student GT, personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student FH recollected:

> [H]e was…talking about how it's a group of slave descendants that were able to maintain a good portion of land, and how ongoing changes of…land being taken away or being used in a way that, like, doesn't really go along with the culture. (personal communication, January 30, 2020).

Student FH grappled with how "really, really different" she perceived the Gullah Geechee people to be, including the group's concept of spirituality associated with their land:

> [T]he meaning and spirituality of… land is so different…when I heard them, it reminded me of, like, Native American culture….I remember one time a woman remarked that, like, "I can see my ancestors in the trees"…which is just, like, an attitude that I would say…people don't really have that spiritual connection a lot of the time. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Student FH, in contemplating "this idea of reciprocity, like, 'I take care of the land and it takes care of me'" (personal communication, January 30, 2020), intimated her growing awareness of how individuals within a community express their culture in innovative ways, as she told the account of a man who made "walking sticks":

> [H]e would go to, like, the forest…make sure that he doesn't take anything that would harm the forest, and…he cleans up the vegetation, and then, I suppose in return, he is able to make a living off of the things that he can take and make into his own art. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Students CC, FH, and GT expressed wonder to learn of such a distinctive social group being part of the US, a group whose expression of space and place seemed to differ markedly from the students' own lived experience.

Native American cultural expressions in dance and dress. Student participants also expressed fascination in learning the history and deep meaning of the cultural practices of social groups that they were already aware existed in the US. Student participants discussed learning deeper meaning in Native American cultural practices of dance and dress. Student DJ mentioned learning how the Native American pow-wow is "very community-based, family-based…traditional, passed on," with "different dances for…different types of people…at different stages in their lives" (personal communication, January 27, 2020). Student DJ recalled

watching a documentary in class, about one individual's "experience, and how he's, like, teaching his kids how to dance, and he learned it from his parents" (personal communication, January 27, 2020). The student described the individual as though he had two incompatible identities: "he's like a—has, like, a job, and he's like a normal person, and then there's…this other side of him that is, like, very important as well" (personal communication, January 27, 2020)—perhaps unconsciously assuming that American mainstream cultural practice is normal.

Other student participants reflected on what they learned about Native American dance and dress as expressions of cultural identity. Student FH admitted that learning about Native American pow-wows "challenged" her assumption that such dances were only for show:

> [J]ust realizing that, like, it's not superficial…and that it speaks to…a greater social thing that we have in the country, like maintaining…your history and your tradition…[despite] oppression or…loss of culture or history. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Students ZA and YY remarked on African American people in Louisiana creating Native American dress for Mardi Gras. Student ZA seemed to remember some kind of mutually beneficial historical relationship between Native Americans and African Americans, prompting this cultural practice: "the Mardi Gras Indians…people in…inner-city areas would…spend the entire year making…Indian costumes, and they…dance in the street…that's cool, like, look at the history of it, because the Native Americans…helped" (personal communication, January 21, 2020). Student YY remembered his instructor explaining how "Native Americans helped, like, free the…slaves in…that area" (personal communication, February 6, 2020), providing one good reason for that social group to claim Native American identity and to celebrate as they do. Student YY recalled seeing videos of the group "re-create…the Native American…dressing for the Mardi Gras celebrations" and then "go through the streets and…meet up with other people"

(personal communication, February 6, 2020). Student YY, describing himself as a person who enjoys "doing things that kinda, like, pay homage in…small ways," expressed admiration for this group's "extravagant way of doing it" (personal communication, February 6, 2020). Student participants discovered that Native American dress and dance comprised cultural practices that are ongoing, tying historical social narratives to current cultural expression.

Cajun culture, then and now. Several student participants declared their surprise in learning that the term *Cajun* referred to a group of people "of south Louisiana" (Student NZ, personal communication, January 22, 2020), not just a type of spicy food. The student participants who reflected on what they had learned about Cajun culture talked about the historical context of Cajun culture, as well as Cajun foodways, Mardi Gras traditions, and connections to the Catholic faith.

Student participants recalled learning about the historical background of Cajun culture. Student BB expressed interest in how Cajun food and art were inspired by "roots in Louisiana and from where they came from, like over in Europe and that area" (personal communication, February 4, 2020). She appreciated the "actual geography" her instructor included in lectures: "she's, like, Okay, look, this is where they came from, this is where they are, here's how they're similar, that's why they thrive here, and stuff like that" (personal communication, February 4, 2020), to see how cultural derivations did not happen by accident. The use of maps in class, to give context, is corroborated in Class Observation Notes 5 (collected October 2, 2019). Student NZ offered more historical details about Cajun culture:

> I remembered being surprised that the…name for the group of people, Cajuns, comes from Arcadians, because it was a group that had left Europe for Canada, but eventually

> got pushed down, or migrated down to…Louisiana" (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student NZ marveled at the mix in the culture of "some European traditions, some Canadian, some Creole traditions coming up from the South" (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Students seemed impressed by the way that Cajun culture kept historical traditions intact, across time and space.

Students GT and PX marveled at Cajun foodways. Student PX reflected on the historical aspect of Cajun foodways:

> [W]e talked about…them implementing those spices and things because they were so close to…Mexican food in general, being exposed to their spices…and then learning about how, like, something they ate a lot was crawfish…they had originated from Canada…or, I guess, specifically, Arcadia, and those crawfish had followed them there, and…gotten a lot bigger…just seeing the path and…how it all interconnected…was super interesting. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student PX commented on the variations in Cajun foodways traditions, with not just mainstream American "salt and pepper" but different spices and "combinations they have, using the same ingredients…putting it together differently" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Recalling the documentary on Cajun culture viewed in class, Student PX exclaimed:

> [H]ow they make food there, who they make food for, like, the culture's just s-o-o different in general, because they make tons of food at a time, just in case someone's coming over or just in case…they, like, want leftovers, but they make food every day. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student GT, perhaps more accustomed to purposely cultivated foods, declared repulsive some of the wild edibles that graced Cajun tables:

> [I]t was really unique, 'cause half the stuff, like, I don't really eat, and I was, like, shocked that…they ate some of that stuff…'cause they were eating, like, frogs…fresh-caught, and…snails, and I was, like, eh, I could never do that. (personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Student participants GT and PX seemed fascinated to learn about the prominence of food in Cajun culture.

Student participants related more knowledge that they gained about the celebration of Mardi Gras in Cajun culture. Student NZ noted her previous awareness of Mardi Gras as "a French Creole tradition" (personal communication, January 22, 2020. Nevertheless, she expressed surprise upon viewing the mumming festivities related to Mardi Gras, and about the traditional Mardi Gras chases. Student SU talked about seeing videos of floats and parades, and described the Mardi Gras chases as "the chase and run, which was…a traditional, like, game that they did" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student QW provided the most elaborate memory of the tradition of Mardi Gras chases:

> [T]he…older kids would chase around the younger kids and…it was very organized…and throughout the years, like, if you started out as a small child, you would work up to being one of the chasers…and all of it ended with, like, they'd get…gumbo, and go to church. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Student SU admitted that he "kind of just thought [Mardi Gras] was like a big party in the South, and that was kind of confirmed in some way, but it's…a lot more than that…it's, like, very important to the people in the South" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student

participants articulated gaining a greater understanding of the significance of Mardi Gras in Cajun culture, as a festival celebrating the communal aspects of Cajun culture.

Student participants pondered the foundation of the Catholic faith as central to the significance of Mardi Gras in Cajun culture, and to Cajun culture in general. Student NZ, noting "the heavy influence of Catholicism," in Cajun life, commented on the religious foundation of Mardi Gras traditions: "I also didn't realize the extent to which Catholicism was still playing…a role in these traditions, 'cause I guess I thought some of these customs were maybe starting to fade away" (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Student QW admitted assuming that being religious usually meant being stifled:

> [B]ut there was also a sort of freedom…the practices that they have, like the Mardi Gras chases…they would, like, dress up for them, and there was a sort of individuality in how they would dress…even though there was a big religious tie to it, like, Mardi Gras, Roman Catholicism…there was still a lot of room for self-expression, which I thought was very—not inclusive, but…more open than I expected…when I think of Catholicism…I think of a really strict, like, church or something, but actually seeing…the kids have their own individuality and…how the…whole community would come together…and…grow as a group…challenged my notions and…opened up my worldview. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

This concept that Student QW articulated, of religious expression acting as a unifier in culture, was echoed by Student ZA, who was able to connect the Cajun practice of Catholicism to her own experience:

> I feel like the most cultural thing I guess I have in my life is, like, the Catholic stuff…but, like, we don't practice very intently…going back to the whole New Orleans thing…a big

> aspect of, like, life is the Catholic faith, which is different than a lot of other parts of the country because, for a long time, Catholicism was not…loved in the US…I definitely, like, appreciated learning about [Catholic influences in Mardi Gras celebrations], because I feel like, especially in Catholicism, it's, like, a one-size-fits-all…you go to any Catholic church in the entire country…or in the world, and you're gonna get the same thing. (Student ZA, personal communication, January 21, 2020)

Not only did student participants reflect on the new things they had learned about the cultural expressions of social groups different from their own, but they were also able to articulate some of the similarities that they found between their own social group and those groups different from their own.

Making Connections with Newly-Discovered Social Groups

One remarkable finding of this study was the students' ability to discuss ways in which the cultural expressions of the social groups, about which they had recently learned, reminded them of their own social groups' practices. For example, Student DJ, who had intimated the seemingly incompatible dichotomy of a modern Native American man dancing in pow-wows, nevertheless related Native American pow-wows to the annual festivals of her Greek Orthodox church:

> [T]he pow-wow's a once-a-year thing, and everyone comes together, and ours is, like, a once-a-year, it's more of a fundraiser for our church, but we also are showing our culture…the kids dance, and we have dance groups, and we practice, and we wear costumes, so I viewed it, when we started talking about it, and I started learning about it, I was, like, This is very similar to what I've always done in my life, and something that's always been very important to me….I feel like the pow-wow is a little more, like,

> structured, and has…more…standards and things…whereas we just kinda, you know, we have a dance instructor that chooses our dances, and, like, we can go make some what we want…kind of tweak it for our own needs. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Student DJ's comments illustrate her capacity to at least somewhat allay the sense of 'otherness' she had previously articulated towards the Native American pow-wows, by recognizing the similar importance of communal dancing in her own experience in her Greek church community.

Students for whom the Gullah Geechee culture was a revelation were also able to connect Gullah Geechee cultural expressions to cultural practices in their own social groups. Despite the newness of the social group to Student CC, she was nevertheless able to connect the Gullah Geechee culture to her own social group: the Gullah Geechee people's "very tight-knit community" reminded Student CC of her sorority, and her "closer friends" from home, among whom she "could probably go up to, like, anyone and have a conversation…definitely I can reach out to any of them…and they would help me, and I'm sure it's probably the same as Gullah Geechees" (personal communication, February 7, 2020). In the middle of our conversation, Student GT experienced an epiphany in connecting the importance of land to the Gullah Geechee people with her own experience: "I think I'm just, like, realizing real estate also was a huge part of my family…now, it's…kind of connecting with me" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student GT was reminded of her own family's land in south Asia, and how her parents felt compelled to sell the land because the student and her brother were not planning to return to south Asia to cultivate the land. Student GT expressed a feeling of guilt that her mother would have to sell the land that had been a gift from the student's grandfather, but the student admitted that their ties to the land had already loosened, since "the journey to get back home is so long, like, it just wouldn't be worth it" (personal communication,

January 31, 2020). Students CC and GT were able to relate social values of the Gullah Geechee people to the cultural expressions of their own social groups.

Students also reflected on the commonalities between the Cajun culture and their own social groups, particularly in the cultural expressions of foodways. Students GT and PX, who were captivated by what they learned about Cajun food culture, both elaborated on similar practices in their own families. Student GT, though repulsed by some of the wild edibles in the Cajun diet, nevertheless related this natural food to her own family's cultural foodways practices: "they use what the land provides them…and that's kind of what my mom does, but she—like, obviously she has to maintain it…versus them, where they just, like, go straight in the wild" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student PX, who had remarked on the distinctiveness of Cajun culture, admitted that she was nevertheless able to "draw a lot of parallels" between the Cajun community and her own "pretty decent-sized Indian community": "'cause the Indian culture is also very, like,…you take care of everyone around you, not just yourself" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student PX recognized "some of the spices they used," and the big pots of food: "a lot of their cooking was just, like, throwing it into a huge pot and just letting it cook for a little bit, and then eating that…some nights when we don't wanna make food, that's exactly what we do, too!" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Students GT and PX explained how their new awareness of Cajun culture helped to illuminate some of the cultural expressions that they valued in their own social groups.

Students articulated gaining a larger view of their own culture, through learning about the practices of social groups different from their own. Student OY was struck by the concept of how people deal with death, and that "different cultures deal with it different ways" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). From his folklore class, he learned to "acknowledge that

there's not a right answer…and there's not a wrong answer to how people handle death and tragedy…but there's lots of answers, there's so many answers" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student OY admitted feeling revulsion upon learning how one of the people groups discussed in class let the dead bodies of their loved ones partially decompose before burying them, but then compared his feelings to the horror expressed by the people group in the video, upon hearing of the 'unnatural' American practice of embalming. Student OY began to view the American grief process as keeping death at "arm's length," dealing with death in a "straitlaced" manner that was "impeding" the grief process, leaving the bereaved "culturally stunted": "death is sort of taboo here…and how we sort of run from it, and it's not something, it's not a part of our everyday life anymore" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student OY mused about what Americans might be able to learn from other cultures' practices:

> I've lost family members, and I've had to work through that grief—and I wonder to what extent that could be mitigated by looking at other cultures, and by examining how they handle and deal with death, because we really do it in a weird way. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student OY credited his folklore class with providing him with a greater capacity to critique his own cultural group practices in comparison to the cultural expressions of social groups different from his own.

Student ZZ, who had assumed the uniqueness of her own Day of the Dead traditions, was thrilled to learn about commemorative practices, of other social groups, that resembled her family's Day of the Dead rituals. She talked about some American memorial practices:

> [I]t's similar to Day of the Dead, but they actually go to the graveyards, and decorate…they just decorate the grave and then come together as a family…people from

> far away, and I feel like it's similar to…what I do. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student ZZ commented on the use of altars in commemorative ways that went beyond the significance of her family's private altar:

> [H]ere in America, 'cause we're here, we…have our own, like, altar…and I saw a lot of other customs did altars, too…and how it's also so similar…and then some of these altars…their meanings for Mexicans got bigger, and actually people use them for political reasons, and other reasons…than just what it's supposed to mean. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student ZZ named her final class project, on the IUB Mathers Museum Day of the Dead exhibit, as one that allowed her to reflect on her own experience, and gain a broader perspective of her family's tradition:

> [A]t the Mathers Museum, the altars…actually had little notes, people could add notes themselves, people could place items themselves…people putting their own things, people putting famous people…some, like, basketball player, some football players, and it's a big change, from…when I do, it's a private thing…and now it's actually into a public area, and it's actually put so people could come and, like, reflect on [the] deceased, and remember that our lives are, like—it's, remember, cherish the moment. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student ZZ was able to put into words how her cultural identification as "Mexican," "of Hispanic heritage," and "Latina" (personal communication, February 3, 2020) became both a source of greater pride, as well as a point of connection to Americans of other cultural backgrounds, through her folklore class experience. Student participants' narrations of new knowledge of

social groups different from them, indicate some broadening of their abilities to relate and connect interpersonally, through their experiences in folklore general education classes.

Defining One's Own Social Groups

Besides learning about social groups that were new to them, student participants spoke about discovering the many social groups to which they belonged, and the effects these groups had on their personal identity development. Student BB credited her folklore class for helping her to gain a stronger sense of her own identity, through identifying the social groups to which she belonged:

> [T]he definitions of, like, folk groups itself, was very dynamic to me…I always thought, like, Well, you're from that culture, and, like, that's your thing…I didn't really classify myself and other people into folk groups or social groups…very much, because I didn't really know what that meant…so it's really nice now, because I can kind of put myself in the groups that I'm in, and say, Okay, well, I'm part of all these things, this is how it affects me, and this is how it changes how I think and how I feel, how I behave. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

Student BB went on to list several of her social groups, including her status as an IU student, her membership in a religious organization on campus, and her major department. Student NZ, like Student BB, also mentioned becoming aware of the meaning of culture as more than just "your ethnic heritage that gets passed down through the generations" (Student NZ, personal communication, January 22, 2020)—a misconception that had made Student NZ feel like she had no culture at all. She realized that she belonged to "mini-subsets of culture," such as being an IU student, a woman, and one of those "people who like books," ending her list with seeming relief: "So, I realize there's a lot more culture in my life than I thought before" (personal

communication, January 22, 2020). These students seemed to attribute a sense of belonging to the ability to identify their own social groups.

Halloween costume choice and social group membership. Some students discussed a class Halloween costume project, outlined in Document 5 (reviewed October 1, 2019), as the impetus for contemplating their own social group membership. While none of the student participants recalled childhood memories of feeling troubled about their costume choices, all who mentioned the class project revealed learning things they considered important, about their own social groups. Student GT ruminated on how, in writing her paper about her childhood photos in Halloween costumes, she learned to see her celebration of Halloween, including her costume choices, as dependent upon all the social groups to which she belonged. The student proceeded to enumerate a long list of her own folk groups, which she defined as "groups I was part of":

> [M]y high school water polo team…my swim team…my friends and I started…Indian culture club at our high school…I also did…Indian dance at home…I've done that for, like, years, pretty much my whole life, so, like, that's also a folk group…I have a folk group here…a group in Hodge, in Kelley, 'cause I have, like, friends in the KLLC….oh, yeah, like, classes have different folk groups, too…my law class, like, we have our own little group…we have, like, the class, and then there's also…the people that you kind of join together. (personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Student GT seemed able to overcome her initial awkwardness with the term 'folk group' through acknowledging her increased awareness of how belonging to multiple social groups affected her outlook on life:

> [The project] kind of had, like, some impact, ‘cause I sat down, and I was, like, Wow, I’m in, like, all these different social groups, but it didn’t really change me that much, I was just kind of, like, was more aware of, like, what I was doing with my life….But it made me realize…maybe I should be joining more clubs. (personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Student GT expressed value in social groups as networks that helped her to define her own purpose in life.

Student PX described her experience with the Halloween costume project as an episode of deep self-reflection:

> [S]o we had this costume project we had to do, right around Halloween, where we were supposed to, like, find a bunch of different images of us in, like, costumes throughout the years, and basically look at how…those costumes reflected our identities….me being Snow White one Halloween…I didn’t think, like, necessarily correlated to my identity, but then having to sit down and think about that…was an interesting experience…I guess I just learned a lot more about maybe the things we do aren’t necessarily—they’re CHOICE, but, like, they reflect something about us that I hadn’t really thought about. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student PX discerned that her childhood Halloween costume decisions may have been affected by her social group:

> I was, like, So why DID I choose my Snow White costume that year?...I like to dress up, I like to have fun, and…this was when I was probably like, 3rd or 4th grade, so Snow White was huge….I guess I just learned more about myself and why I’m in the social groups I’m in…people in those social groups have…similar interests…to what I

> have…and, they, like, enjoy doing the things I like doing. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student PX seemed willing to accept the fact that her social group influenced her choices, for the sake of enjoying similar experiences, and having fun.

Other students mentioned the Halloween costume project as a lesson in recognizing the stultifying aspects of social group membership. Student BB reminisced:

> [The project] really just caused me to think, Okay, well, why did I dress up as that, at this point? Like, what influences were affecting me that I would dress up as this?...third grade, it was, like, a fairy princess, or something, and it was, like, Well, I watched Disney movies all the time, I watched Tinkerbell all the time, a lot of influences were on me at that point…all the other girls are going to dress up as this, so I wanna dress up as that, because I wanna fit in, and I wanna be the same as everybody else. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

While Student BB saw her younger self's Halloween costume choices as conforming to her community's social norms, Student AA viewed her subgroup within mainstream American society as iconoclastic, including her own Halloween costume choices:

> I grew up really poor…not a good home life for a…good portion of my childhood, but one thing that was always welcome in my family was self-expression….I think while most…girls growing up around the same time I did, you know, their costume choice was usually a princess, or…a more girly thing….I was…encouraged to like the things I wanted to like, so I went as a Power Ranger…I went as…Archer, from the movie *Small Soldiers*…who not only is a male character, is a, like, a fighter…and that's not usual for

> girls to do….our interests, and the things we wanted to do, that was never something that was questioned, in my family. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student participants' comments illustrate that, in their experiences, enactment of social group membership seemed to depend on which of one's social groups offered the most salient rewards for belonging, in any given situation.

Family traditions as important to social group membership. Some student participants described gaining a greater appreciation for their own family traditions as connections to broader historical and social contexts. For example, Student SU reflected on how he learned that his family's traditional sourdough pancakes constituted his own piece of folklore more than "just, like, passed-on family things" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). The student mentioned preparing a class reflection presentation that included the history of sourdough baking, and intimated his pleasure and amazement at discovering that his family tradition was connected to the California Gold Rush days. Student SU credited this class assignment for broadening his view of his family's customs: "it was just kind of looking at it at a different lens…so I saw, like, different things were more important in the scope of folklore than just, like, family history" (personal communication, January 31, 2020).

Student YY elaborated on the purpose of those weekly reflection assignments, with two class members each week being assigned to talk about their own traditions, such as a family story passed down, or holiday food traditions. He related a traditional family story, that he told in class:

> [T]he older men in my family would always tell us about, like, how no matter, like, what you want in life, you're not gonna get it unless you work hard, and they always—went into, like, an extravagant…way of telling us, just, like, Oh, someone did this, but then

> they found the easy way, they didn't get the result they wanted. (personal communication, February 6, 2020)

Student YY considered these presentations "eye-opening…how different things were, and…how they're also all—connected in a certain way" (personal communication, February 6, 2020). Students SU and YY communicated not only pride in relating their own family traditions to their classmates, but also in gaining a greater understanding of social interactions in general.

Examples of Applying New Terms to New Understanding of Social Groups

Besides gaining a broader yet more personal understanding of terms familiar to them, such as identity, student participants attempted to make sense of new terms that they had learned in their folklore general education classes, terms that they found helpful in understanding the cultures of social groups, both their own social groups as well as social groups different from their own. Since student participants discussed a variety of terms, I will provide just a couple of examples that reflect two prominent elements of modern folklore study: tradition, or the transmission of culture; and the performance of culture in the act of remembering (Glassie, 1989, 1995; Noyes, 1995, 2012). Student DJ commented on the Halloween costume project marking a turning point in class for her, in being able to relate to the concept of **tradition and variation**:

> [T]hat was a moment when we really, like, you know, we've been talking about tradition and variation, but a lot of times in things none of us…relate to…but when we, like, looked at ourself [sic], we see how our lives have changed, and how, like, our Halloween costumes have changed so much, and it tells you a lot about, like, our lives and the path of them (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

In looking at pictures of herself in childhood Halloween costumes, Student DJ articulated her fresh understanding of tradition and variation, from reflecting on her personal experience:

> I realized, yeah, like, I'm never gonna…go trick-or-treating again myself, but, like, maybe, probably with…my kids one day…it's one big circle…as you get older, you're gonna…be doing different things, but, it's not, like, a bad thing, but it's just…not always going to be the same way, in your life. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

For Student DJ, the concept of tradition and variation, in the cultural expression of social groups, became viable to her, as she applied the concept to her own experience.

Students QW and NZ described their newly gained understanding of **active and passive tradition bearers** in relating the term to their own experiences. Student QW provided definitions for these terms:

> [A] passive…tradition bearer is someone who…gives an artifact to a museum, and just kind of participates in the folklore by having it…or…performing a song…but doesn't actually know the significance behind it…or otherwise doesn't relate to it…but an active tradition bearer, then, is someone who…was born into the culture that it came from…it's sort of ingrained into their identity, and they pass it on to others to…help spread awareness…of that…culture. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Student QW talked about her aunt connecting to distant relatives in Ireland, who performed as active tradition bearers to the student and her family by relaying to them stories about the architecture of their region.

Student NZ pondered her participation in Renaissance festival culture, as a regular attender of the Michigan Renaissance Festival. Remembering the definition of *festival* as "a calendar custom participated in by the community" (personal communication, January 22, 2020), Student NZ recounted how she and her dad made sure to go to the Michigan Renaissance Festival every year, when her family lived in Michigan. They made a habit of enjoying the food,

shows, and watching the people in costume at this annual event. Student NZ related her personal experience to the concept of active and passive tradition bearers:

> [M]y family is heavily German, but…not much of that got passed along, so I always thought of festivals as going to, like, whatever German festivals are common, and so I kind of figured…I never really went to, like, an actual festival, but then…the class helped me realize that…with the active and passive tradition bearers, that, like, I'm not really a tradition bearer for…Renaissance Festival, or what not, but I'm still a participant, and so that does kind of make it my experience. (personal communication, January 22, 2020).

Students DJ, NZ, and QW seemed to ascribe value to attaining terms that helped them to reflect on their own cultural experiences in ways that deepened their understanding of social groups.

Students CK and OY contemplated the applications they were able to make to their own experiences, of the idea of **the performative-commemorative spectrum**. Student CK defined the term as understanding "where people stand in the creation of…the memorial" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). She explained that people whose experience draws them closer to a memorial, experience it commemoratively, while those not directly attached to a memorial may experience it more as a performance:

> African Americans, say, visiting El Mina [slave castle in Ghana] might feel more of the commemorative side…while Europeans might feel more of the performative side, because they're not as directly attached to it. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student CK claimed that memorial creators "might also be more focused…on one side or the other, depending on the message that they're trying to convey" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student CK felt that the term helped her to "understand how social groups are affected by a site, as well as how the people caring for that site have to think about things in

order to create an experience…that people across the board can appreciate" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Despite her comparatively extensive exposure to commemorative sites around the world, Student CK acknowledged how the folklore class influenced her perspective: "it really helped me realize…my standing as, like, a White, middle-class woman…from the US has really determined how I see different sites…both in the US and outside of the US" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student CK seemed to attribute value to the concept of the performative-commemorative spectrum in helping her to understand both her own experience as a member of particular social groups, as well as the experiences of other social groups different from her own.

Student OY provided his own applications of the performative-commemorative spectrum. He noted how some memorials can be "highly commemorative [and] deeply personal" (personal communication, January 24, 2020), such as a bench in memory of his girlfriend's grandfather, or performative, such as a roadside cross. Student OY also cogitated on his own excursions to dark tourism sites---having been to the El Mina slave castle in Ghana four times, and to Ground Zero in New York City at least once---and what "keeping it respectful" (personal communication, January 24, 2020) looked like to him, in entering these sites, as a White American male. In talking about visiting El Mina, Student OY said:

> [Y]ou have to acknowledge that just by letting people trampse [sic] around in the castle, that alone…brings up…different ideas…it complicates the issue of what had happened there—having all these White people be, like, "Whoa! Wow!"…it's gross, it's weird, but also, it's probably important. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Students CK and OY verbally illustrated the understanding they gained of the cultures of social groups, through their learning and applying the concept of the performative-commemorative spectrum in cultural practices of remembering.

These are just a few examples of how student participants, through their folklore general education classes, were able to define folk or social groups in more inclusive ways that acknowledged their own complicated roles in cultural expressions of everyday life.

Theme 2: Discovering the Power of Stories, Urban Legends, and "Hidden History"

The theme of discovering the power of stories, urban legends, and "hidden history" seemed to flow from the folklore general education class syllabi, through the class observation notes, and into the perceptions of the student participants of their cultural learning outcomes. Syllabi listed genres of verbal art that appeared in the comments of student participants: fairy tales, legends, and myths (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 4, reviewed September 24, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 2, 2019); urban legends (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019); personal experience narrative (Document 3, reviewed September 23, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019). Class observation notes presaged stories that stuck in the memories of student participants, relayed through interviews: the effect of the food contamination urban legend of Church's Chicken in African American communities (Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019); the legend of the Bell Witch of Adams, Tennessee (Class Observation Notes 2, collected September 23, 2019); the life story of bluegrass balladeer Ola Bella Reed (Class Observation Notes 5, collected October 2, 2019); the accounts of rumor tied to the stigma of contagious diseases (Class Observation Notes 6, collected October 24, 2019). The theme of the power of stories, urban legends, and "hidden history" resonates through the folklore general education

class syllabi and class observation notes, not only purporting the intent to impress upon students the ways in which stories shape and impact society (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019; Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019), but also demonstrating the potency of individual narratives in illuminating the values of a community or region (Class Observation Notes 5, collected October 2, 2019).

Over half of the student participants in this study contributed comments on their newfound knowledge regarding verbal folklore, including stories, urban legends, and personal narratives. As Document 1 (reviewed September 22, 2019) focused exclusively on verbal folklore, student participants from that class indicated learning about people groups and cultural concepts by engaging with communal stories. Since students may have become acquainted with verbal genres of folklore from grade school, several of the student participants began their folklore classes expecting to hear about "old-timey tales" (Student AA, personal communication, February 3, 2020), or "myths and stuff like that" (Student FH, personal communication, January 30, 2020). Most expressed surprise in learning about the broader social context of verbal cultural expressions, or, as Student SU construed this lesson: "all stories aren't just stories" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). In learning to recognize, define, and analyze tales, urban legends, and personal narratives, student participants articulated growing awareness of the place stories hold in society, both for social groups different from their own, as well as within their own social groups.

Defining Genres of Verbal Folklore

As student participants discussed learning to define the various types of stories, they began to tease apart the differences among the genres. Student SU expressed his interest in the differences among folkloric narratives: myth, legend, and folk tale. He came up with a definition

for legends: “legends are usually…based to be…true, or…written to be true, when really they can be…quite ridiculous” (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Feeling more acquainted with myths from his primary and secondary school education, Student SU defined those types of stories as “based on the origin of…the people” (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student SU mentioned the importance of localization of a myth or legend or folk tale, such as the Bell Witch legend in Tennessee—recounted in Class Observation Notes 2 (collected September 23, 2019)—and how important that story is to the people in that area: “it’s, like, a big part, of…the people of…the town that it was in, and just the area and…I thought it was interesting in how…a small story can be, like, everyone knows it, and then it’s, like, a thing that people would just talk about” (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student SU remarked on his expanded awareness of the importance of stories in the life of communities.

The genre of *urban legend* was chief among the type of stories about which student participants learned in their folklore general education classes. Student BY pieced together a definition of the term, that he might proffer to curious family members or friends:

> [A]n urban legend would be a story…whether or not it’s true, sort of beside the point, but…they have some, like, sort of supernatural or extraordinary element to the story, but…they say something about our society or a culture or a way of living…they sort of address, I guess, taboo subjects in a sort of lighthearted fun way, that you wouldn’t normally be able to bring up in just, like, common, everyday conversation. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Student RV found out how, while urban legends exist in every culture, the way urban legends are told differs from culture to culture, reflecting the worldview of that culture. For example, she described the stories of the German Grimm brothers as “gruesome and dark” (personal

communication, January 28, 2020), while the Native American legends were "more about nature" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Nevertheless, Student RV understood them as tied together, in the same genre. As student participants retold the urban legends they studied in class, they also pondered the relationships of those stories to social groups different from their own, to their own social groups, and to themselves as individuals.

Urban Legends of "The Other"

Some of the urban legends about which student participants mentioned learning emerged from communities that were different from the student participants' own social groups. In contemplating those stories, student participants seemed to view those stories as historical, or unsophisticated, being outside their own experience.

The food contamination legend of Church's Chicken. Student participants described learning how to recognize food contamination legends, identified as media announcements of rumors regarding "bugs in McDonald's food" (Student AM, personal communication, January 22, 2020), and other such tales, that denote community distrust of the company. Student EI recalled the urban legend of Church's Chicken—echoed in Class Observation Notes 1 (collected September 23, 2019)—as a social commentary emerging from African American communities:

> [W]e learned about how…African Americans as, like, a folk group, viewed, I think it was Church's Chicken, there was an urban legend about how Church's Chicken was, like, putting chemicals in the chicken to sterilize…young black men, and, then it was super interesting to me how we learned about…White Americans, at that time…thought it was all hogwash…they were, like, This is a stupid story, but to Black Americans, it was, like, a very real fear because of just, like, the crazy history of eugenics and race science in America. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Though Student EI did not disparage the belief African American communities displayed in this urban legend, she did describe such a belief as being new to her, outside of her own social experience.

The urban legend of La Llorona. Student participants ruminated on learning about Latin American communities through urban legends such as La Llorona, Spanish for 'the crying woman.' Student AM provided a definition of the legend of La Llorona:

> [W]e also learned about La Llorona, which is a Hispanic urban legend. It's about this ghost lady, um, but then we also talked about how it changed…because originally…it came from Spain, and then it was kind of Westernized and…had a lot of…variations on it. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student BL elaborated further on what she had learned about La Llorona. Mentioning that she had heard about the character in "mainstream…American culture" (personal communication, January 23, 2020) through a recently produced movie, Student BL expressed being enlightened by finding out "where it originally came from and…what it actually meant to the culture it came from" (personal communication, January 23, 2020). Student BL admitted initially assuming that any listener would despise the character of La Llorona—"Oh, she's this awful woman" (personal communication, January 23, 2020)—who allegedly drowned her own children for the sake of keeping a man's love. However, Student BL learned that, in Mexico, young mothers found La Llorona to be a sympathetic character, being able to "relate to…her struggles" (personal communication, January 23, 2020). Student BL realized that urban legends affect different audiences in distinctive ways.

Student BY, aware of the same "modern American sort of context" (personal communication, January 29, 2020) of the recently produced film of La Llorona, expressed

surprise by the "heavy cultural ties to the story" (personal communication, January 29, 2020). Admitting that he had somehow ignored the Spanish name of the main character in the film, Student BY learned that the story actually belonged to "a South American society" (personal communication, January 29, 2020), and how that changed the effect of the stories of La Llorona on various audiences. Remembering the video on La Llorona viewed in class, Student BY commented, as Student BL had, on the sympathy the "lower income mothers" (personal communication, January 29, 2020), interviewed in Mexico City, felt for La Llorona:

> [T]hey tended to focus on…sort of the, uh, emotional reaction…of the character of La Llorona, and…drowning her kids…it wasn't as much about, like, she couldn't…cope with this many children along, 'cause she was a single mother, it was more…if you wanted to at least have some survive, or…take care of yourself…'cause you didn't have the income, it was more focused on, like,…these mothers could sort of relate with the story…they can tell where she's coming from…even though it's not like something, obviously, that they would do. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Considering urban legends with Hispanic settings as a whole, Student BY noticed that legends such as La Llorona took place in the more rural "back roads" (personal communication, January 29, 2020) of Mexico City. The student expressed an assumption that this setting, of rural Mexican culture, was "pretty…heavy on…I guess most religious and spiritual…sort of aspects, so…I think they were more perceptible [sic] to believing in, like, legends and supernatural tales…than some, like, urban American settings" (personal communication, January 29, 2020). Student BY felt he had gained more of "an idea of…how urban legends can sort of play off of, an maybe even sometimes affect…what kind of values…that country has, or…the sort of things they experience" (personal communication, January 29, 2020), Student BY intimated an

assumption that religious beliefs belie a certain measure of superstition and gullibility, of primitiveness, in a social group.

Bridging cultures: the legend of the San Antonio ghost tracks. At least one student recognized her own social group practices, in the legends of cultures different from her own. Student AM described learning about the tradition of ghost tracks in some Hispanic communities:

> [W] talked about ghost tracks…it sounded familiar to me…but we learned about…in Hispanic families it's like a rite of passage, and it's like a cultural pilgrimage…that they do with their families…and I didn't know it connected to their culture, I just thought it was like a cool thing people do sometimes. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student AM remembered watching a video in class of "a Hispanic family going to the ghost tracks, and, like, putting flour on their cars, see the little handprints of the ghosts" (personal communication, January 22, 2020)—though the student acknowledged that her instructor "never said…explicitly whether they were true or not" (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Student AM connected the tradition of ghost tracks to practices of her own social group:

> I know a lot of people, um, in my social group who, like, always go to…cemeteries at night, because there's ghosts, and they do that 'cause they're young, and they feel like they should, and I guess that's similar to why Hispanic families go to the ghost tracks, because it's like, "You're young, you have to witness this,"—um, so there's a lot of overlap…with the different stories. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student AM related this bridging of cultural practices to the vocabulary term *ostension*, listed as a class unit in Document 1 (reviewed September 22, 2019), and defined by Student BL as "you can, go do something like someone else has done, and, like, do it yourself your way…but you're

still kind of, like, doing it in the route they are doing it" (Student BL, personal communication, January 23, 2020). Student AM recalled ostension as describing a practice in her social group:

> [Y]oung people, like in my social group…go on, like, legend trips, where they, like, go visit this haunted place, or they go visit this thing that has a ghost…I remember people doing that in high school, in my social group…I hadn't thought about that in a while, but now it kind of makes a little more sense. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student AM articulated a new awareness of connections between traditions of some Hispanic communities with cultural practices of her own social group, through learning about the urban legends in her folklore general education class.

Urban Legends and Personal Experience

Student participants recounted lessons from their folklore general education classes that allowed them to relate urban legends to their own social groups and personal experiences. While some student participants described expanding their worldviews through research and fieldwork, other student participants made meaning of urban legends by reflecting on the new information they had acquired in class.

Comparing urban legends across cultures. Though some student participants expressed an interest in researching the social significance of urban legends, Student DD, upon learning of "the different consequences of being visited by the sleep paralysis demon" (personal communication, February 14, 2020), felt compelled to develop her own theory. Student DD expressed fascination upon learning how different cultures explained the physiological/psychological phenomena of sleep paralysis. The student participant mentioned how a documentary on the topic, viewed in class, shocked her, and left her wondering "how is it so different, and how are the consequences so…dire?" (personal communication, February 14,

2020). Student DD began "looking into all of the different things that kind of would contribute to that being the most terrifying thing" (personal communication, February 14, 2020)—the brain being awake, but the body unable to move. Student DD based her theory on a hypothesis stated in the documentary:

> [O]ne of the, like, neuroscientists in the documentary was saying, "Well, I think what happens is, because you're in that state, your brain is trying to fill in, you know, why you're so terrified. It's going to give you imagery to go along with the terror you're feeling of not being able to move." (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

Student DD thought about the cultures featured in the film and how the sleep paralysis imagery matched the culture's greatest fears:

- North American culture:

  [I]n American culture, we really like our space. We do not like to be cramped together; if someone's talking to us for the first time, especially, we keep our distance. And so it totally makes sense that the Old Hag would come into our room, and get really, really close to us. That's like, nasty here…one of the first things that we do not like here. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

- Tanzanian culture:

  [W]e also looked at sleep paralysis in Zanzibar, Tanzania….this demon was sexually assaulting people, and they'd be lying there awake, being assaulted by this demon that isn't real, and they'd look around, and it would move on to their kids!...I was looking into Zanzibar, and turns out sexual assault there is a huge and very real threat, and especially [for] women that have children. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

- Hmong culture:

> And then in Hmong culture, they would get sleep paralysis, and they'd get so shocked, that they would die in their sleep, like literally die in their sleep….And then I looked into Hmong culture, and I learned that, typically, in Hmong culture, it is the responsibility of the kids to take care of the parents when they get older, and the grandparents, and they all live together, and the one thing you can't do, if you're going to take care of your parents, is die, you know? (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

Student DD expressed wonder and pride in producing her own theory on sleep paralysis imagery, from her attempt to "connect the dots…and see why it was different in these different cultures" (personal communication, February 14, 2020):

> So, after putting that together, I guess, if someone from a different culture were to tell me about sleep paralysis…that they had, I could maybe come to some conclusions, based off of what was frightening them…because…it's so strange how elegantly it correlates with, like, the…things that you DON'T like, in that culture. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

Associating sleep paralysis episodes with high levels of stress, Student DD was able to analyze her own experience of sleep paralysis, finding her theory fairly accurate: "I think, without my personal experience with that, as well…I don't think I would've been able to come to that conclusion" (personal communication, February 14, 2020). Student DD, too diffident to share her theory with her instructor, admitted that our discussion provided her the first opportunity to share her theory of sleep paralysis imagery. She acknowledged that her own experience, as well as her identity as an American, allowed her to recognize the veracity of her cultural meaning making.

Comparing urban legends within social groups. Some student participants discovered differences within their own social groups, through conducting class field work projects on urban legends. Student RV talked about a class assignment in which she interviewed members of her social group—college friends—to compare some of the stories they were told as children:

> [W]ith my friend group right now, I'm the only one from…southern Indiana, and the rest are from, like, central Indiana, or…up north…I had to do…an interview with them…I chose my friends to do it with, and their stories they were told growing up were SO different from mine, just, like, a three-hour difference in...travel time, and I was, like, wow, I didn't think it would, like, change that much…over that short period of time, of, like, travel time….it was just…Boogeyman stories, and everything, and, like, one of them was, like, the Boogeyman's in the closet, and the other one's, like, it's under the bed, the other one's, like, it's behind the door…Mine was under the bed. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student RV described the assignment as requiring her "to reflect on what I was told, like, my story, and…analyze and go into depth, like, what I think…that story means…the, like, backstory of it" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). While complaining that doing research on oral urban legends was "nearly impossible," the student was yet able to pinpoint a concept taught in class that helped her to make sense of the differences in her social group's stories: "social, cultural, and individual…context in stories" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Student RV provided one conclusion of her analysis:

> [O]ne of my friends is, like, in…a richer part of Indy, and, like, pretty much all of southern Indiana isn't rich, so I feel like the stories changed a little bit because…socioeconomic statuses…so, I think that really, like, changed…the way the

> stories were told, and, like, how I understood what they were trying to say, and…what their stories meant. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Though Student RV insisted that her folklore class "created more questions…than answers" for her, finding "so much unsureness in all of folklore" (personal communication, January 28, 2020), she was still able to apply newly learned concepts to make sense of the socioeconomic variations of urban legends.

Student BY, who described himself as growing up with an "urban type of perspective" (personal communication, January 29, 2020), contemplated the differences in stories and storytelling "between, like, urban and rural sort of settings" (personal communication, January 29, 2020). Having conducted fieldwork in a project similar to Student RV's, Student BY recounted his interview with a college friend:

> I actually had a friend, she's from a small town, I interviewed for the, uh, I think it was the final project…and she…had way more…scary stories and urban legends than I'd ever thought…I think I asked why, uh, she, may have more stories than, like, someone from a bigger city….she was, like, "Yeah, we just don't have anything to do"…I think maybe with, uh, the area she grew up in…maybe…she was allowed to open her mind up to more supernatural things, whereas…maybe in [a] more urban area where there's more kids, more, uh, activity just even outside your window, you're a little more preoccupied with those sorts of things, and I…didn't realize there may be some sort of, uh, divide in that way, I guess. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Student BY concluded that meeting people from a variety of settings, even from his home state, and hearing their stories, had become an important part of his college education, and challenged his worldview. As a matter of fact, after relating the account of his interview with his friend,

Student BY had "a thought that passed by" (personal communication, January 29, 2020): he began to understand that the urban legends from the back roads of Mexico City may have indicated more about the rural/urban divide, than about religious superstition. Student BY's understanding was illuminated by both his interview with his friend and our conversation for this study.

Urban legends and the Internet. Student participants expressed surprise in learning that the Internet and social media act as the modern equivalent of oral transmitters of urban legends. Student AM described how her folklore class challenged her assumption that urban legends were strictly oral:

> [T]here were a lot of, like…current ones, um, like a lot of ones that happen on the Internet…Internet posts that technically are urban legends—I kind of assumed that those were different, for some reason…I think it was just because they're on the Internet, or they're recent…I assumed they wouldn't be covered, even though, like, I don't know why, it seems kind of irrational, 'cause technically they are stories. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student AM voiced the striking discovery of having to consider her own social media as urban legend. In a similar vein, Student BL, in conducting an interview with an older Folklore student for her folklore general education class project, learned of the long 'shelf life' of urban legends, from an older social media platform to a newer one: "she got it from, like, an e-mail forward…and I, like, saw a Youtube video of it telling the story, so I thought that was [a] really interesting parallel, because it's, like, a decade difference, and we both, like, learned through…the Internet" (personal communication, January 23, 2020). Both Students AM and BL mentioned gaining awareness of the Internet as a modern conduit of urban legends.

Student participants also commented on the possible danger of believing Internet-transmitted urban legends. Student WW recited the origin and effect of an urban legend that she had assumed had originated in her grandparents' time, but that had actually been created on the Internet:

> Slenderman was a creepy pasta that was created in, like, 2008 or 9 or something, on…an Internet forum…it was, like, part of a competition to…manipulate old photos to try to give it, like, a scary element, or something, so someone took a few old photos, and he…manipulated in…a tall, large, faceless man in a suit…and so he spread that with, like, "I found these pictures, and I don't know what to think about it," and so, like, from those pictures, like, Slenderman just took on a whole thing of its own…and it became like a huge cult sensation, and…people actually believed it so much that several, um, crimes have been committed…because of…Slenderman….Like there was the attempted murder of, like, the 12-or-13-year-old girl by two of her friends, so that they could appease Slenderman, and so that he wouldn't come and target them. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Like Student WW, Student EI also recalled learning about that account, from a documentary viewed in class, and expressed alarm at the "really grave consequences" (personal communication, January 28, 2020) that occurred from believing in the Internet-transmitted urban legend. These student participants found themselves forced to contemplate their own interactions with the social implications of urban legends.

Urban legends and self-reflection. Student participants noted not only the social commentary urban legends provided, but also the effect urban legends had on how they

themselves viewed the world. For example, Student AM described learning the term *wedge driver legend* and the racist underpinnings of a type of urban legend with which she was familiar:

> [F]ake, or allegedly fake legends that people would tell about, like, a group of Vietnamese immigrants in this town, or…Islamic immigrants, so those were created to, like, kind of…drive a wedge between…people, like, who were born in America and people who came here so…that's a new term for me…it's kind of something that, like, I feel everybody is a little familiar with…but it…helps me understand, like, the lengths that people will go to…alienate the people…that they aren't used to…it helps me understand, like, why people would start those rumors, because they're racist…it's easier to be, like, this is a wedge driver, it's probably not true, these people don't like them, so it's easier to, like draw that conclusion. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Once she was able to name the phenomenon, Student AM expressed dismay over what she viewed as the common occurrence of this type of urban legend:

> It was…both surprising and not really surprising, because it was something I was familiar with…'cause I had seen those…e-mail chains and those posts on Facebook, but…I didn't know that it happened frequently enough that there was, like, an official…vocabulary term for it…which, like, kinda sucks, that…it…happens often enough that people can, like, easily identify it as that. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student AM intimated, through relating this experience, an improvement in her own ability to analyze online information for underlying subtexts and assumptions.

Students BL and BY revealed their new understanding of the gendered aspects of urban legend. Student BL admitted being taken aback by the sexually explicit topics brought up in class, as warned in Document 1 (reviewed September 22, 2019)—not gratuitously, but to make

the point of how the genre of urban legend "differs between genders" (Student BL, personal communication, January 23, 2020), with women getting ridiculed more often than men. Student BY also commented on his surprise at the gendered aspects of urban legends: "I didn't realize there was such a focus on male and female differences, sort of…interlaced in the stories" (personal communication, January 29, 2020). He discovered, from the class, that there are "hidden messages" in urban legends, that provide clues about his own culture and social group:

> I guess the class sort of, altogether with different legends, sort of showed me…how…these kind of themes could be found in the stories, and what they say about our culture…it's maybe about how WE see it, than how it actually is. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Students AM, BL, and BY articulated how their eyes were opened to the deeper meaning of urban legends in relation to the culture out of which these stories spring.

Student EI came to understand the gendered aspect of urban legends as pervading her own experience. A class theme that stuck with Student EI "was that urban legends…force you to…a negotiation of the truth" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). She acknowledged assuming, before taking the class, "that all those legends I had heard were just true, or that I was the only one that had heard them, that was challenged 'cause I realized, Oh, no, these are just urban legends…it's a part of everyone's life" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Student EI related a class discussion about legends regarding sexuality:

> [P]eople were sharing ones they had heard, and it just made me think a lot about, like, in high school and middle school, stories you hear, you know, rumors you hear, about girls in your grade, especially girls, and then I realized, Wait, everyone has versions of these stories, like, these were probably not real things that happened, and, just, like, degrading

> rumors, legends made up about people, and then it forces you to take a step back and realize why people are telling those stories…and that was something I felt, like, a personal connection with. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student EI went on to elaborate on how the class discussion caused her to think differently about her own social group—and about herself:

> I think this activity, and some of the other ones we had done, made me think more about what's taboo within my social group? Like, what's not talked about, what's criticized and judged, and then it made me think about WHY it is judged like that, and…it just made me more aware of the patriarchy that I had already known to exist, kind of, especially with these rumors about degrading young women…you know, because they're perceived as sluts, or something. So that made me think about, just people I had known, and judged, and just how I shouldn't have, and how that's…such a cultural pressure; it's so pervasive…just kind of made me take a step back from that. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student EI's comments illustrate steps toward personal development, both in identifying a cultural practice in which she had been complicit in harming peers, and in recognizing the social construction of that cultural practice, and its unjustness and need for change.

Student participants indicated how their new knowledge of the social backdrop of urban legends would help them to be more thoughtful of their reactions to rumors, in the future. Student BL commented:

> I'm more conscious, like, "This isn't really real," but you know…people in my friend group can be, like, more naïve, that they, like, spread something, that I could be, like, "Oh, that's actually an urban legend." (personal communication, January 23, 2020)

Student WW echoed this sentiment, in identifying the concept she called "the friend-of-a-friend thing" (personal communication, February 7, 2020) as a touchstone to remind her not to be so gullible to believe friends' urban legends:

> [I]n the future, if I'm ever going to hear a story, and someone's, like, "My friend's brother encountered this," or whatever, like, I'll be able to…assess it, and be, like, Maybe that didn't happen, maybe it's just something they heard….I've been very gullible in the past, but, like, after taking this class, [at] least in regards to, like, the urban legend thing, I'll be less susceptible to believing them. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Student WW provided an example of the concept of *oikotype*, defined by Student EI as "motifs of legends that are told all around, but they'll be perceived as specific to different areas" (Student EI, personal communication, January 28, 2020). Student WW described a class assignment in which she interviewed one of her sister's friends, attending another large, Midwest university:

> [S]ome of the things we talked about was, like, I realized that there was, like, a similar legend on our campus, and I was, like, Oh, that's probably someone heard it and wanted it to spread to somewhere else…and so it's kind of like grown and proliferated by just them wanting to spread it somewhere else. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Student EI summed up revelations on urban legends learned in class, that had been voiced by other student participants:

> [A] lot of times…we think that our experiences are, you know, unique and really limited to where we live and, you know, who we're surrounded by…but it's actually shared—it made me more aware that a lot of these stories, these legends arise from, like, bigger themes within society…whether it's…class struggle, or…racial tensions and conflicts,

> and just all those pressures that are very universal…but they feel specific to communities. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student participants expressed greater awareness of the power of urban legends in shaping their own, their social groups', and their societies' ideologies and actions.

The "Hidden History" of Personal Narratives

A prevalent motif within student participants' class reminiscences was their discovery of how stories revealed history hitherto unknown to them. Student participants remembered learning how folklore covers the history of the "average-day average person" (Student SU, personal communication, January 31, 2020), and anticipated how this concept changed their view of the world. Student DJ elaborated on the concept of the revelation of 'hidden history' through the study of folklore:

> [O]ne thing we learned is that…in your history books, and things that they teach you in, like, history classes, that's only 5% of, like, history, and folklore is…the other 95%, and that we're always going to hear about, like, the most important people or the biggest issues of the time, but whereas folklore focuses on the more everyday people of life, so I guess realizing that, in certain classes, like history-type classes, or in high school, you're…gonna hear about, you know, presidents, and people who made an impact, but there are so many more people to tell such a bigger story…that just live your day-to-day life, 'cause, I mean…very few people are president, and that's just not reality for so many people….I just think it's really important to remember, like, that, there's so much more than what you will read in, or learn in, like, US history class. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Student DJ recalled some of the stories of ordinary people from class, and concluded that "there's so much more to other people and their cultures and their history than what is presented on the surface" (personal communication, January 27, 2020). Student FH also found herself challenged to see everyday people as important, and worth studying:

> [T]he class…challenges your idea…that everyday people aren't important or…shouldn't be studied…and it totally puts that on its head, because you learn about how it's relevant right now…it speaks to a greater, like, beneficial thing to know, and to, like, recognize outside the class, like, what you're doing right now is folklore, like, it should be relevant, should be history, not, you know, just the Thomas Jeffersons…99% of the history we all know about, which is rich old White men. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Students DJ and FH admitted gaining an appreciation for the personal narratives of ordinary people, through their songs and art and cultural performance, and commented on their realization that everyone's story matters.

Student AA provided an example of the personal narrative of an individual life, as she related the story of a 20th-century bluegrass balladeer, Ola Belle Reed—recorded in Class Observation Notes 5 (collected October 2, 2019)—and the difference the student felt in hearing this story in class, as opposed to reading typical history textbook accounts:

> I had not taken a history class since high school, and it's all very cookie-cutter, it's like, you know, fourteen-hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue, and we don't talk about the fact that he enslaved lots of people, and killed a lot of people…we talked about a woman named Ola Belle Reed, and usually my experience with history is that, they'll basically just tell the most important things, Ola Belle Reed, she grew up in…whatever year it was that she grew up, I've forgotten it now, and she was…really

> instrumental in helping to kind of cultivate bluegrass…she was on a radio show for a really long time, she used a lot of Irish ballads, uh, to make songs, and then she started writing her own music, and it was about, you know, women suffering, and the suffering of the lower class, and that normally is all you hear about somebody, but they went on to talk about how her later life was very tragic, she suffered a stroke and—in the '80s, and she lay in bed, unable to speak or move, until she died in, I think earlier 2000s. And it was very tragic…because, you know…her whole life was her music, and it was robbed of her in her later life….And, I feel like things like that help give that person a life, if that makes sense…because if I just…learn facts about this woman, she's just a woman in a book, but the fact that they told me about her life…--she's real! (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student AA was struck not only by the poignancy of Reed's story, but also by the realization that this woman's story mattered more to her than all the history textbook accounts she had read over the years. Student PX sums up this sentiment:

> [I]t's the people that we DON'T talk about in history class, that we talk about in folklore, and we do this to get a sense of the culture of that time, and the people of that time, 'cause they shaped who we are today, just as much if not more than the historical figures we talk about in history. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student participants discovered that the variations of urban legends, the personal narratives of individuals, the documentaries and accounts of communities, and the projects and research on their own cultural practices influenced their worldviews in ways, as Student FH stated, "for helping build a framework within yourself to think critically" (personal communication, January 30, 2020), both about themselves as well as about other people.

Theme 3: Applying Cultural Learning to Own Daily Life and Career Goals

The theme of applying cultural learning to own daily life and career goals is one of the chief revelations from the interview date of the student participants in this study. Class syllabi provided several useful purposes for students' learning: understanding the impact of story to connect, divide, and negotiate between and among social groups (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019); recognizing one's own place in social groups, and the influence of those social groups on the individual (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019); appreciating the worldviews of diverse cultures (Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019); identifying and analyzing cultural practices from a critical point of view (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 3, reviewed September 23, 2019; Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019). Class Observation Notes 1 (collected September 23, 2019) and 5 (collected October 3, 2019) reinforced the lesson to students of identifying and analyzing urban legends and stories with an eye towards uncovering layers of assumptions and anxieties, and living unencumbered by fear and greed. However, the purposes and projected learning outcomes of course syllabi and class observation notes required the bridge of student perceptions of cultural knowledge learning, to articulate the usefulness of what the student participants perceived they had learned.

As student participants described what they learned about folk or social groups, and the power of stories in social life, they expressed their perceptions of the usefulness of this new cultural knowledge in learning, echoing the class syllabi learning objectives mentioned above; for example:

- Student AM's understanding of the wedge-driver legend as the impact of story to divide social groups;

- Students BB and GT recognizing their place in a variety of social groups, and the influence of those social groups on their thoughts and behaviors;
- Student DD's research and theory building comparing the worldviews of several cultures through the various imaginings of psychophysiological phenomena;
- Student OY's critical analysis of cultural practices surrounding death.

Student participants took the opportunity provided through our conversation to ponder any possible benefits and connections of cultural knowledge from their folklore general education classes, to their everyday and future aspirations.

Applying Cultural Learning to Daily Life

In applying the cultural knowledge gained through their folklore classes to their own daily lives, student participants expressed not only an appreciation for understanding their own culture, as well as the cultures of others, but also a desire to use their newfound knowledge to create positive change in their daily interactions with other people. Student AA pondered using storytelling techniques to provide "subliminal messages" for subtly confronting her "great-aunt…people like her…or people just in my hometown" (personal communication, February 3, 2020) about their racist attitudes. Student AM described her new understanding of stories as constructing culture:

> [T]he class…helped me understand, like…our culture exists because we had these legends that we told each other, and things that…helped solidify ideals within stories to be passed along, so…in my understanding, it was kind of…a preservation of cultural stuff through stories…so I have, like, a better understanding of…how culture was shaped by it. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student BB credited the class in helping her to be "able to analyze traditions that not just my family have, but, like, other families have" (personal communication, February 4, 2020). Student WW provided an example of analyzing her own culture:

> [M]y family is Jewish, I was raised Jewish, so I thought that, like, Judaism was our culture…and…like, the biggest part of our culture, but, like, taking this class I realized that's just one minor part of our culture, and our culture is, like, where we're raised, who we know…the people we talk to, the people we don't talk to…through this class I learned that culture is more than just, like, one or two identifying factors, but culture is literally everything about you. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

These student participants articulated how understanding their own cultures broadened their view of themselves, of their social groups, and of society.

Student participants also considered valuable gaining a wider view of the world. Student GT admitted that, though her initial impression of the class was "this isn't going to be useful to me" (personal communication, January 31, 2020), her attitude began to change: "as we kept going, I was, like…in the long run…it's always going to be at the back of my head…I'll just be more aware of, like, what I'm doing, and have…a better understanding of the world" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). This ability to see the world with a more enlightened understanding, through a folklore general education class, was also valued by Student ZZ:

> I feel like my cultural knowledge has gone…so much ahead, and I feel like I've learned so much about different cultures, and I feel like that's what I wanted, at the beginning…I didn't know I wanted it, but after, like, going through this and seeing…all the things, I feel like it's given a…heads-up to understanding, and when I go to, like, events and things, and people be, like, "Oh, that's kinda weird," I'm like, "It's what they do, it's

> their culture," I feel like I'm more open-minded now…to seeing different things than just my own….I feel like folklore has changed a lot of my perspective. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

These student participants considered gaining a broader worldview to be important in understanding how to interact with the world.

Student participants seemed excited about gaining a new openness towards interacting with the world. Student CC credited her folklore class with a desire to lend her voice to communal dialogue:

> I am open to doing more things, especially because, like, the discussion…I'm, like, a little bit more soft-spoken, so the fact that I had to, like, speak out, and…say my opinions occasionally…definitely caused me to be a little bit more outgoing. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Student YY expressed having gained a desire to try new things:

> [T]here's a lot of things that I learned that…I…don't think I would've learned if I didn't take the class, and I'm definitely glad…I learned some of them, 'cuz, like, I wasn't so much…close-minded, but…even like the food, things I wasn't so open to, I'm, like, that's pretty good, I would like to try some of that. (personal communication, February 6, 2020)

Student FH learned more about stepping into others' shoes, in empathy:

> I…grew up very privileged…when I learned kind of through my friends…about inequality and, you know, lack of opportunity, and I come and I listen to these songs, like, it really just absolutely reaches your core….I might not be facing the brunt of oppression, or whatever inequality is out there, but I 100% need to recognize that I

> haven't been through it….when you hear a song about protests about, you know, police brutality, and, like, no, maybe I haven't been through police brutality but…my best friend is like my sister, and she's been through it, and therefore I've been through it…or I need to act as if I've been through it. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Student participants articulated applications of their newfound cultural knowledge that indicated, in their own eyes, healthy signs of personal development.

Applying Cultural Learning to Major Courses of Study

In contemplating application of cultural learning from their folklore general education classes to their major courses, student participants provided a range of opinions. Several students mentioned finding little or no correlation between their new cultural knowledge and their majors: Student DD in Computer Science; Student QW in Animal Behavior; Student RV in Math Education; Student YY in Exercise Science. Students DD and RV attempted to describe the disconnects they perceived between cultural knowledge learned in folklore, and the knowledge base of their majors. Student DD remarked: "in computer science you're kind of going in, and you're just in your head, and you're in the screen, and it's just all in…whereas folklore is more holistic, it's more out" (personal communication, February 14, 2020). Student RV stated: "my major is math, and there's not really much, like, folklore behind…math. It's just, like, math, the answer is this, there's no questions about it, where folklore there's so much unsurety [sic]" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). These student participants perceived a dichotomy between folklore learning and their major courses.

Some student participants, on the other hand, named specific topics from their folklore general education classes that related to their majors. Student AM discovered a connection between folklore and her Journalism major: "we talked about…fake news a little bit, which us

journalists hear a lot about…we talked about how…fake news is its own type of urban legend…and I hadn't really seen it like that before, so that was interesting" (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Student CK connected her cultural knowledge from folklore to her research for her Spanish major honors thesis:

> I definitely see, like, a relationship between forms of commemoration and the literature that I've studied…in the Spanish department…of people commemorating their experiences with various traumas…in the Spanish-speaking world….cultural knowledge is really important…in the Spanish department, because it's important to see the distinctions…between not just necessarily national boundaries, but…cultural groups within the boundaries. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student CK attributed her new cultural knowledge to a deeper understanding of research in her major area.

Student DJ applied her newfound understanding of tradition and variation to her Business major:

> I guess the whole concept of…variation obviously can be related to finance and companies and stuff like that…everything is constantly evolving…but then there's also going to be things that always stay the same, companies have policies, they're never gonna change, so some things gotta stay the same, no matter who comes in, and who leads, directs the company. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Student DJ demonstrated how one cultural learning concept carried through her reflection on her own identity, to a clearer view of her major field of study.

Student FH associated her study of psychology with her class unit on veteran art:

> [A]s a Psychology person, I…learn a lot about, like, social psychology, and…how we think and perceive…you know, decision making, prejudice, stereotypes, things like that…and I would say definitely from, like, a social perspective…[what I learned in this class] goes along with…you know, human behavior. Um, one thing, when we learned about veteran art…one man was making, like, the dioramas…and he had terrible PTSD, and one of the things that they were saying is, like, making it into miniature gave him the control over the situation, and I think that directly speaks to psychology, because it was a coping mechanism for him…it enabled him to express himself…and, metaphorically, being able to control an uncontrollable situation, that he experienced, has a lot of depth to it…as a therapeutic measure. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

While Student FH found a direct disciplinary connection between veteran art and her Psychology major, Student PX, a Biochemistry major, used her folklore class's veteran art unit to connect cultural knowledge to the world of scientific research—a coupling that may rarely have been expressed in print before now:

> [S]o we talked about, like, veteran art for a week, and, um, looking at all these veterans and how they had been through a lot of similar experiences, but expressed themselves very different ways…through, like, painting, or sculpting, or quilting, things like that…so just everyone brings something very different to the table, even if you have very similar backgrounds, is something I think is important to remember in science, 'cause a lot of times there are people doing, like, research and things that are similar to yours, or, like, kinda coincide, and you're, like, Well, why am I doing this, if they're already doing something like this?...a lot of science is meant to be reproducible, so, um, realizing that, one, it's not bad if I reproduce what they did, but also I could end up somewhere very

> different than they ended up, and looking at the ramifications of that. (personal communication, January 26, 2020)

Students AM, CK, DJ, FH, and PX retained specific topics of cultural knowledge to help enrich their interaction with their declared major programs.

Some student participants articulated valuing the cultural knowledge they had gained in their folklore general education classes, towards supplementing or refining their academic major interests. For example, Student ZZ placed high regard in understanding people's cultural practices, as a Criminal Justice major:

> I personally want to understand, like…why people do things…as much as just, like, why did you do this, why is crime like this, and I feel like, seeing…how people…take care of death and everything, I feel it is a different step to see how people are, like, thinking about it…and how they do things, and what it really means to someone. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Like Student ZZ, Student EI considered her folklore class as an important supplement to her Environmental Science major:

> [M]y major is very…STEM…there's not a lot of humanities elements to it, but with where I wanna go with it, I think that…it's important for people to…have, like, balanced educations…if I was just taking only chem and bio, and I never sat down to, you know, take this course and think about these things, I think I'd be missing out on a lot of important education. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Likewise, Student ZA expressed appreciation for the breadth of knowledge she had gained from her folklore general education class:

> I appreciate the knowledge I got from it, because I feel like, sometimes you can get into a class, especially when it's…more like math-and-science based…and you feel like stuff is being drilled into you…but I like the idea of folklore and just, like, liberal arts in general, because I think it's important to…open your mind to, like, different ways of thinking about the same topics, 'cause I think it's easy…to get entrenched in, like, your own perception, or…your own view of it. (personal communication, January 21, 2020)

In contrast, Student WW found several ties between folklore and her Linguistics major:

> As a Linguistics major…linguistics is language, which is something shared by a community, by a culture, and it changes, and it grows, due to, like, whatever's happening, um, in the culture at the time…which is how different slang and different…dialects are created, and so now I feel like, since folklore is all about…cultures and how different things change at different times, like, they're very interconnected…'cause, like, they're both informal parts of…a bigger culture. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

These four student participants expressed appreciation for the cultural enlightenment they felt added breadth to their degree programs.

Students GT and NZ found their new cultural knowledge useful for refining their major interests. Though Student GT had named finance as her first Business major choice, which she described as "mostly numbers" (personal communication, January 31, 2020), the student expressed a desire to "explore more…of the [Business] majors [to]…connect…the social aspects of some of the stories, like, with those messages…I think, were just, like, really important to me" (personal communication, January 31, 2020). Student GT admitted that "folklore kind of also helped me, like, develop…the base, where it was, like…you're going to need ethics…you're gonna wanna have good ethics, and to be in business" (personal communication, January 31,

2020), as she contemplated changing her major to international business, affording her more reasons to take classes with a global focus.

Though Student NZ had yet to declare a major, she credited her folklore class with spurring her on to consider what she might enjoy studying, especially History:

> I personally see the connection with history in pretty much everything, but…I feel like a lot of folklore is also understanding why things are folklore, and where they came from, and a lot of that has to do with the general broader concepts of history, like, this one group of people has been on the move for a very long time, and so that's why a lot of their, um, material culture depicts migratory animals, or something like that. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student NZ applied cultural knowledge to one of her History classes:

> I think cultural knowledge can pertain to anything, because just understanding—how people's culture impacts their lives can also, like, help explain why they do some of the things they do. Like, with history…--this actually got brought up in one of my…classes earlier today…you know there were entire wars fought…because people didn't recognize each other's legitimacy as a group?...we were talking about some of the…earlier Catholic-Protestant wars…and just understanding how the difference cultures within Catholicism and Protestantism, like, impact their worldviews, and…especially…within the context of history, how that might drive people to have disagreements that…are such that they go to war over. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Student participants, reflecting on the possible connection between cultural knowledge learning and their majors, were, more often than not, able to attribute some usefulness to their new cultural knowledge in expanding their horizons within their major fields of interest.

Applying Cultural Learning to Career Goals

In contemplating their career goals, student participants found even more connections to the cultural learning they had gained in their folklore general education classes, particularly in being the kind of people they wanted to be in the work world. Students DD, QW, and EI distinctly stated that the cultural knowledge they had gained was more important to them personally than whether or not such learning connected to their career plans in the sciences. Student DD explained:

> I think whether or not I can apply it in my career, doesn't really matter, 'cause it'll be providing a different kind of knowledge ability, you know?...I like knowing about a lot of things, a lot of different things…that I don't necessarily, like, HAVE to know about? But it's really cool to be able to talk about it…with someone who might surprisingly know them as well. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

Like Student DD, Student QW also credited her folklore class in making her conversant on more subject matters, with fellow students or future colleagues:

> [I]t is kind of relevant right now…as far as interacting with people on campus…because I've definitely met people of different cultures…and, when people talk about different traditions they have, or festivals, customs in their…home regions…I'm more attentive to asking, Wow, what does that mean? Like, how is that significant to you?...So, definitely more of a social aspect…because people have their cultures. (personal communication, January 27, 2020)

While Students DD and QW expressed the desire to be more interesting individuals, Student EI articulated how her learning from her folklore general education class could help her to be a better environmental scientist:

> I think it's—as being an American, and as someone who wants to work with…people, government, whatever, I think it's really important to understand about culture…folklore, and kind of the more neglected sides of—just the research that goes into my field…because people and their cultures are still very important to how we think about the environment…and what people value in the environment…I think less about just my career plan, I think it's an important thing in being a person. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Students DD, QW, and EI viewed their newfound cultural learning as being important to their own development as individuals with whom others would want to work.

Student EI also articulated the advantages of cultural learning in the job search process. She had already begun constructing answers to job interview questions:

> I was kind of thinking about that on my way over here, 'cause I was, like, thinking about how I…want to take, like, more folklore classes…then I was, like…what would jobs think about that…if they saw, you know, that I just took a bunch of folklore, and I was, like, well, I think it's important because…it makes you understand people and…just the different backgrounds, especially in such a diverse country…I think it's so important to be able to connect with people in…cultural groups, social groups, outside of your own…and realize that a lot of experiences are universal, and even if they're not, that you can understand them. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student EI understood that she needed to have an answer ready for employers curious about the value of folklore and cultural learning in the field of environmental science.

Many student participants perceived some usefulness of cultural knowledge learning to their future careers, whether in media and design, healthcare, education, or other fields dealing

with people. Students AM, BL, and BY, focused on media careers, expressed the need for cultural understanding in their chosen fields. Student AM ruminated on the value of cultural knowledge for a journalist:

> [K]nowing about…other cultures and their…folklore and their stories…journalists always try to be diverse in what they cover, so it's always…good to be familiar with how this culture is, what's important to them…just understanding their value in order to, like, better relate to them and talk to them. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Students BL and BY hoped to apply cultural knowledge to future careers in media production. Student BL re-introduced the concept of ostension, adapting other people's ways of performing tasks, in her comments on media development:

> [Y]ou know, the term…ostension…could be kind of related to, like, how you make media and stuff…you're making media, and you have different ways you do it, you do it, based on, like, how you learn, and meet some…other people, such like that. (personal communication, January 23, 2020)

Like Student BL, Student BY attempted to put into words how he hoped to use his new cultural knowledge in media production:

> I can maybe use…some skills I've picked up about…how urban legends can prey off of stereotypes or insecurities…maybe try to be in projects that are a little more…positive…not lighter subjects, necessarily, but…tend to say something maybe about…society or something that's not so, uh, reliant on stereotypes, or…manipulation in such a…sort of overused way…I think it sort of makes me have ideas that are sort of more hopefully outside of the box. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Students AM, BL, and BY spoke of their cultural knowledge as helpful in creating culturally sensitive materials for other people to read or view.

Other student participants considered using cultural knowledge for designing items in collaboration with clients and their cultural traditions. Student FH, a budding fashion designer, applied cultural knowledge to her idea of dressing herself and other people:

> [W]hen I think of something that I want to wear, or I want to design…I think about, like, what this says about that person's identity, and also I don't want to take away from an identity, so I don't wanna, like, you know, wear something, or create something that someone it doesn't belong to should wear….I guess culturally appropriate would be an easier term, but, like, I wanna make sure that…it's appropriate for someone to wear what I deem as fashionable, but not…stripping meaning from something because, I don't know, I'm ignorant. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Student FH understood that fashion design, especially with individual clients, requires communicating across cultural practices.

Student BB elaborated on the connection she saw between the cultural knowledge she had gained in her folklore general education class, and her dual career plans of real estate and interior design:

> I think I definitely do see a connection there, just because we did have…a section on vernacular architecture, which is just the everyday…architecture of our homes, and where we work, and things like that…so with wanting to get…a real estate license, and wanting to pursue interior design as a career…I think it's very important for me to be able to identify cultural things…cultural narratives, that people have…and how to best express their identity in their homes…because I'm not the one living there…so, what I

> want isn't necessarily the most important…so I think it's really important to understand their cultural narratives and be able to put what they want and what they need in their home….So, I think that's really a big part of what I'm gonna have to learn, and what I'm gonna have to start doing, as a designer. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

Students BB and FH recognized the importance of cultural knowledge in providing housing or clothing designs that coordinate with the backgrounds, tastes, and needs of people who seek designer expertise.

A number of student participants related their newfound cultural knowledge to working directly with or for other people. For example, Student SU felt that the cultural knowledge he had gained from his folklore general education class could help him in dealing with people, in the business world:

> [I]t's not a class that I would just…put away, I could always keep it in the back of my mind, just the study of different cultures…can be applied to, like, if you're with someone from a culture you learned about, you know a little bit about them. (personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Other student participants were able to more directly apply cultural learning from their folklore general education classes to their future professions. Student CK ruminated on connecting her newfound cultural knowledge to her future career plans in law:

> I want to be a lawyer, so, being able to apply the performative commemorative spectrum to a new, essentially, fact scenario…and that type of thing, will be really useful…but directly…in terms of being able to be respectful of cultural differences, both just in general in the workplace and with clients, and understand that, you know, not every case

> looks the same, partly because…people come from different social groups. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Student RV thought about her cultural knowledge in conjunction with her anticipated teaching career:

> [W]henever I'm teaching kids…if I, like, understand their background and, like, where they come from and…their household, it'll…make it, not easier but it'll, like, help me find a way that works for them—with my teaching style….So, I feel that, the folklore class that I took really helped, like, with that aspect of it. (personal communication, January 28, 2020)

Student OY, also desiring to be an educator, connected his learning from his folklore general education class to how he should treat people in his career as a student affairs professional:

> [T]hrough the framework of this class, it does help me to sort of further understand…and sort of step back and not act like I know…something I don't know…so with regards to…people of different backgrounds than you…even people who you think you can relate to, you shouldn't necessarily go into it thinking that you can….I still have to come at it from a sensitive and sort of, you know, listen a lot…and not assume. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Students SU, RV, OY, and CK expressed a desire to retain their new cultural knowledge in order to be effective and empathetic professionals.

Student participants heading into health professions seemed to grasp close connections between the cultural learning from their folklore general education classes, and meeting people's healthcare needs. For example, Student YY recognized the link between understanding human development for his career in exercise science, and his folklore class: "even when you see, like,

human development, like, it tracks along the same way…when we learned folklore we learned some human development, like, talking stages and stuff" (personal communication, February 6, 2020). Student PX credited her folklore general education class to the possibility of being a better physician:

> [T]his class honestly just helped me understand people in general a little bit better, which I think is definitely transferable to medicine, since we'll be interacting with people on a daily basis…trying to provide the best care for them…and learning a little more about who they are, where they come from, and, like, what things mean to them…would definitely be helpful in treating them. (personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Students YY and PX expressed an understanding that practicing healthcare is more effective if the healthcare provider has more cultural knowledge of the people they seek to help.

Students CC, ZA, and AA described cultural sensitivity, particularly in cross-cultural communication, as a valuable asset in serving healthcare clients. Students CC and ZA, both aiming to be speech language pathologists (SLPs), considered how cultural learning from folklore might influence their approach with clients. Student ZA related her folklore class to the creativity needed in the work of speech pathology:

> I remember we talked a lot about different…folk narratives…and I honestly just thought that was enjoyable…maybe I'll work with kids…that's a huge thing in speech pathology, when you work with kids, you have to…have very…diverse approach, because with kids…you don't know what works for them….for a lot of…speech pathologists, at least that I've shadowed, and stuff that I know…they do use storytelling, that's a thing. (personal communication, January 21, 2020)

Student CC also related cultural knowledge to a creative approach in speech pathology:

> I know that…SLPs, like, they have to be…creative, and…think outside the box…so I'm sure that this [class] probably, like, helped me with that…in the future, just to, like, remember…I can always think about this in a different way…I can always be open-minded, 'cause…I'm taking Spanish, I'm hoping to minor in Spanish…so…I could be helping people, like, with speech impediments…in the Spanish language…they realize…I didn't grow up knowing Spanish, so if someone comes in knowing Spanish, like, their only language…I have to…have a different mindset…be a little empathetic. (personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Student AA spoke about the importance of having greater cultural understanding in her desire to provide mental healthcare for Spanish-speaking communities:

> [Y]ou know, with what I'm wanting to do with trying to reach Spanish speakers, is that it's one thing to know someone's language; it's [an]…entirely different thing to understand their culture….depending on where you grew up, and…what your culture's like, it shapes your…experiences…I'm never going to fully know and understand the experience of someone who grew up in Mexico, that's just not possible, but at least I can build a bridge. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Student AA's statement seems to sum up the perception of all the student participants on the main usefulness of the cultural knowledge they gained from their folklore general education classes: attaining a greater capacity to be a bridge between themselves, as individuals and as members of different social groups, and individuals and social groups both familiar and new to themselves, in their daily walks of life.

The reflections of the 22 student participants in this study represent a possible way to determine actual cultural knowledge learning outcomes of folklore general education classes.

Not only do the interviewees' statements appear to illuminate the three themes that emerged from the data, highlighting the most salient points that students perceived as having learned, but the interview data also seems to add color and clarity to the syllabus outlines and the class observation notes of single lectures of each fall 2019 folklore general education class. This chapter provides an example of how the voices of students might amplify the arguments for the value of cultural knowledge learning objectives in an undergraduate general education.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was initially begun to ascertain whether or not undergraduate students actually gain cultural knowledge learning outcomes from folklore general education classes, as folklore educators intend for students to do. The purpose of this study has centered around providing undergraduate students an opportunity to reflect upon and to articulate their perceptions of cultural knowledge, understanding, and skills gained from folklore general education classes. Using document analysis of course syllabi and observation notes of single class lectures as a backdrop, the interviews with 22 student participants allow me, the researcher, to explore three main research questions:

1. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, if at all?
2. How do students perceive their experience in a folklore general education class as contributing to their understanding of cultures different from their own, if at all?
3. How do students articulate any usefulness of the cultural knowledge gained in a folklore general education class?

The student participants' stories met my intent to capture, through my interview protocol, some sense of the students' development of intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015) through experiencing a single folklore general education class. In using qualitative research methods such as document analysis, observation, and especially semi-structured interviews, I sought to illustrate some of Yin's (2016) features of qualitative research, including:

- Representing the view and perspectives of the people [or participants] in a study;

- Contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help to *explain* social behavior and thinking;
- Acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. (p. 9)

In this chapter, I will interpret the student participants' stories as they apply to my study's research questions and conceptual framework of intercultural maturity development. I will also seek to demonstrate Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of narrative inquiry in two ways:

- In considering "*the person* [as] the context of prime interest" (p. 32, emphasis in original) in analyzing student participants' reflections for indications of intercultural maturity development;
- as contributing "the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance" (p. 42) to the literatures of undergraduate general education and folklore education, in relating my summary of the student participants' narratives to my literature review in Chapter 2.

Through relating my findings to existing general education and folklore education literature, I will indicate how my research fills in gaps in the literature, as well as provide recommendations for future research and real-world applications of my project.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

In fleshing out the three main themes that emerged from the student participants' stories, and echoed in the document analysis of the class syllabi and class observation notes, I confirmed, for the most part, what I had hoped to find in my research: that student participants perceived their experience in folklore general education classes as having contributed cultural knowledge, understanding, and skills both of themselves and their own social groups, and of social groups different from their own; and that they perceived some usefulness of this cultural knowledge and

skills, for their daily lives as well as for their current study and future career plans. Also, through the student participants' narratives, I recognized some indication of development in King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) three dimensions of intercultural maturity:

1. Cognitive, moving towards a more complex "meaning-making system" (p. 574), including acceptance of knowledge as constructed "from personal experience, evidence from other sources, and others' experience" (p. 576);
2. Intrapersonal, also known as *identity development*, moving towards "a sense of self in which various aspects of one's identity are integrated in ways that provide a culturally-sensitive and well-considered basis for making decisions about intercultural interactions" (p. 579);
3. Interpersonal, moving "from norm-based to principled reasoning" (p. 581), in intercultural relations reflecting "students' ability to examine the fairness of social systems [and]…the understanding that social systems are cultural constructions and can be changed" (p. 581).

I will first discuss the research findings in relation to this study's three main research questions, and then I will connect student participants' comments to the conceptual framework of intercultural maturity development.

Studying Folklore: Connecting with Self and One's Own Social Groups

The student participants' stories demonstrated the students' perceptions that the folklore general education classes contributed to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, as asked in this study's first research question. This result corroborates what I had anticipated finding, from the results of my 2017 pilot project as well as from the learning objectives of folklore educators (Fish, 1984; Hirschi, 2001) and from document analysis of the

class syllabi (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019; Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019) and class observation notes (Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019; Class Observation Notes 3, collected September 24, 2019). Student participants indicated how class lectures and projects taught them how "to recognize and analyze their own traditions" (Fish, 1984, p. 47) and to learn "a better understanding of themselves and of society" (Hirschi, 2001, p. 42). For example, Students SU and YY mentioned gaining a greater appreciation of their family stories and traditions—Student SU in his family's traditional sourdough pancakes, and Student YY in his instructive family stories—through learning to connect these practices to broader historical and social contexts. Likewise, through discussion class presentations, Students NZ and QW indicated discovering how their family bonding practices—NZ building memories with her father by attending the annual Michigan Renaissance Festival, and QW meeting distant Irish relatives through her aunt's correspondence—broadened their understanding of social group membership and being a part of passing on tradition from one generation to the next. Several student participants—Students AA, BB, DJ, GT, and PX—elaborated on the insights they gained about themselves and their social groups, from conducting their Halloween costume projects, viewing photos of their childhood Halloween costumes and analyzing what those Halloween costume choices meant regarding their social group membership and influences. Student participants articulated how the folklore general education classes taught them to recognize and understand how the traditions in which they participated helped shape their values and connect them to disparate social groups.

Student participants also described gaining greater understanding about themselves as per learning objectives outlined in the syllabi of folklore general education classes. For example, Students NZ and ZA discussed the impact that the concept of communication within social

groups had on their own study of language, as well as on their understanding of the effectiveness of language within social groups, including their own communication. These student participants' comments reflected the course learning objectives outlined in Document 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019) relating to understanding communication processes in cultural practice. Students CK, OY, and ZZ contemplated the impact of their own positionality in the performance and commemoration of death and remembrance at various venues and annual events. These students' ruminations reflected course learning objectives from Document 3 (reviewed September 23, 2019), which copied Arts and Humanities learning outcome 6 of the IUB general education plan:

> *Ability to explain and assess the changing perspectives* on the meanings of arts and humanities traditions, and to explore one's own identity within prior and current intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural frameworks. (IU, 2009, p. 8)

The student participants who related their work on their Halloween costume projects noted the identities they were enacting through their costumes, the social groups influencing their costume choices, and the resources from which they were able to draw in order to participate in their neighborhood Halloween traditions. These student reflections seem to fulfill course learning objectives indicated in Document 5 (reviewed October 1, 2019), denoting students' ability to identity the diversity of social groups and cultural expressions within the US, and the differences in availability and access that individuals have in choosing the resources to perform cultural identity. Student DD mentioned a class project that required students to investigate either their own medicine chest, or that of a friend, to consider the health consumer habits of herself and her social group. Contemplating the role of health practice choices in societal events and decision making denotes a course learning objective in Document 6 (reviewed October 23, 2019). Student

participants perceived gaining understanding of themselves and their social group membership, in accordance with the intent of folklore general education course syllabi.

Student participant narratives also indicated self-reflection on lessons observed in class. For example, a number of students discussed how, through their folklore general education classes, they came to realize and understand their relationships to the spread of urban legends, and how they needed to negotiate the truth of those legends: Students AM, BL, BY, EI, and WW. This personal connection to urban legends appeared to be an expectation of learning, as in Class Observation Note 1: "If I think a legend sounds true to me, I'm more likely to spread it" (collected September 23, 2019). Student CK recounted associating the concept of *flashbulb memory* to her Spanish honors thesis research—a memory that "happened right then, but part of it is this rehearsal later on" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). The student realized that "when we talk about it, when we rehearse and reinforce those memories…that are based on our status as members of a social group, we have different purposes" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student CK's contemplation of her positionality in relation to venues such as the Oklahoma City bombing memorial reflects Class Observation Notes 3: "Flashbulb memory: vivid memory of some emotionally raw event, often associated with a big disaster….Seem so vivid, but are still inaccurate memories" (collected September 24, 2019). Student participants' stories demonstrated that they perceived their folklore general education classes as contributing to their understanding of themselves and their own cultures, in ways that were intended by folklore educators, including their own instructors.

Studying Folklore: Connecting with Cultures Different from One's Own

In answer to this present study's second research question, student participants' narratives illustrated their perceptions of the cultural knowledge and skills that they gained, from their

folklore general education classes, as contributing to their understanding of social groups different from their own, though, in my opinion, not always as clearly as the knowledge gains they articulated about their own social groups. This finding demonstrates the learning objectives of folklore educators, both in the research literature (Hirschi, 2001; Steckert, 1984) as well as through document analysis of course syllabi (Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 4, reviewed September 24, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019; Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019) and class observation notes (Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019). Many of the student participants learned to "experience…other cultures more deeply" (Stekert, 1984, p. 62), and to have "a better understanding of other people" (Hirschi, 2001, p. 42). For example, Student YY expressed experiencing admiration for the Mardi Gras Indians—a social group new to him—while Student FH retained a number of details about the lives of the Gullah Geechee people of South Carolina, about whom she learned in one memorable class lecture. Students BL and BY described illuminating lessons on the Latinx cultural context of the urban legend of La Llorona, and how their own youthful, Midwestern American, 21st-century viewpoints were not the most salient standpoints from which to understand the social significance of the legend's main character. Many student participants articulated their perceptions of cultural knowledge learning from their folklore general education classes as connecting them to a better understanding of social groups that were new to them.

Student participants' stories featured aspects of class lessons that included the learning mechanisms and media indicated in class syllabi, meant to help cement cross-cultural lessons in students' psyches. Student BB articulated the effectiveness of these lessons for her, particularly in learning about Cajun culture: "You had all of the information in front of you, and you were able to see them as a dynamic…people group…as opposed to just the people over there"

(personal communication, February 4, 2020). Several student participants who recalled details of Native American dress and dance—Students DJ, YY, and ZA—as well as those who pondered Cajun life and culture—Students BB, GT, NZ, PX, QW, SU, and ZA—referred to documentaries viewed in class, that helped to impress upon them the real-life cultural context of the cultural practices about which they learned. Such videos were mentioned in Documents 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019) and 5 (reviewed October 1, 2019) as ways to help students explore different cultural communities. Likewise, audio recordings, such as the protest music that stirred the heart of Student FH, and the songs of Ola Belle Reed discussed by Student AA, were also promoted in Documents 2 and 5 and in Class Observation Notes 5 (collected October 2, 2019), as media meant to help students related more deeply to culture and communities new to them. Student participants indicated that the audiovisual aspects of their folklore general education classes were effective in contributing to the cultural knowledge that stuck with them afterwards.

Student participants' narratives also indicated greater awareness of cross-cultural connections, through their folklore general education classes, as outlined in course syllabi and class observation notes. Student ZA admitted that coming up with cross-cultural connections, such as the Catholicism she shared with Cajun culture, aided her in recalling information on new social groups for class assignments and exams. Several student participants recognized and articulated some of the cross-cultural similarities between their own social groups, and the cultures they initially found so different from their own—a class purpose noted in Document 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019). For example, Students CC and GT expressed empathy for the Gullah Geechee people of South Carolina, Student CC through her own affinity for close-knit communities and Student GT through her family's experience of having to sell their inherited land. Student DJ realized that Native American celebrations, in which dance and dress were key,

were not so different from the annual festivals held at her family's Greek church. Students GT and PX seemed surprised yet pleased to admit that Cajun foodways resembled the practices of their own South Asian American communities, and Student ZA discovered a new appreciation in connecting her family's Catholicism to the enduring Catholic foundation of Cajun Mardi Gras traditions. As Document 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019) also noted the purpose of students discovering complications in cross-cultural differences, so Student OY wrestled with the cognitive dissonance he experienced in comparing traditional American death and mourning practices with traditions that seemed strange and grotesque at first, but also somehow more humane. Student DD's homegrown theory of the cultural differences in sleep paralysis imagery reflected the course objective listed in Document 6 (reviewed October 23, 2019) to teach students how to use health to analyze differences among social groups. Student ZZ elucidated the effectiveness of public displays, as well as her family's own private displays, of ephemera, or symbols of commemoration, as noted in Class Observation Notes 4 (collected September 24, 2019): "How do you make something absent feel like it is present? With material objects." Student participants indicated that the cultural knowledge they gained from their folklore general education classes provided them with greater understanding not only of cultures different from their own, but also of the connections between those new and seemingly strange cultures with the social groups to which the student participants belonged, and had somewhat taken for granted until given an opportunity to reflect.

However, the fact that student participants considered new social groups' cultural practices strange or different, to the point of being somehow wrong or bad, may indicate a continued limited understanding of the legitimacy of cultural differences. Such a learning outcome belies the intent of general education programs, such as that of IUB featured in this

study, to help develop students who are properly prepared, "[r]egardless of vocation,…to engage with the world around them" (IU, 2008, para. 4). Albeit that all 22 students in this study anticipated taking more classes and engaging in more experiences to expand their cultural knowledge and skills, mainly due to interest, this study seems to indicate that undergraduate students need more than one cultural learning experience in order to grow to "[accept] cultural differences and [tolerate] cultural ambiguities" (IU, 2009, pp. 8-9) that colleges and universities have taken the responsibility to promote through general education.

Studying Folklore: Connecting Cultural Knowledge to Daily Life and Career Goals

In answer to the third research question of this study, student participants articulated uses of the cultural knowledge gained from their folklore general education classes that included and also went beyond the course objectives and purposes of course syllabi (Document 1, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 2, reviewed September 22, 2019; Document 3, reviewed September 23, 2019; Document 5, reviewed October 1, 2019; Document 6, reviewed October 23, 2019) and lectures captured in class observation notes (Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019; Class Observation Notes 5, collected October 23, 2019). Students BL, BY, EI, and WW revealed lessons they hoped to carry with them, about negotiating the truth of the stories they heard, as noted in Document 1 (reviewed September 22, 2019), in order to recognize urban legends and the societal anxieties echoed in those tales. Students AA, BB, and GT ruminated on their own place in a variety of social groups, and the influence of those social groups on their decision making and self-expression, as aimed at in Documents 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019) and 5 (reviewed October 1, 2019). Students CC, YY, and ZZ expressed a greater appreciation for diverse cultures, coupled with a desire to interact more purposefully with people of cultures different from their own—a class objective articulated in Document 6

(reviewed October 23, 2019). Students AM, CK, and DD discussed eye-opening experiences of critical analysis of cultural practices, as considered important in Documents 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019), 3 (reviewed September 23, 2019), and 6 (reviewed October 23, 2019). Student AA, along with the aforementioned student participants contemplating urban legends, described lessons from class (Class Observation Notes 1, collected September 23, 2019; Class Observation Notes 5, collected October 3, 2019) that reinforced clarity of vision in uncovering societal layers of assumptions, anxieties, and encumbrances of fear and greed. Student participants applied the cultural learning they had gained from their folklore general education classes, to respond and interact more thoughtfully and intentionally in situations and with other people in daily life.

While some of the student participants acknowledged the differences between studying folklore and studying their own major disciplines, most of the student participants were able to connect the cultural knowledge and skills they gained from their folklore general education classes to the careers they were preparing to pursue after college. Student participants who saw little or no connection between the study of folklore and their own majors tended to be majoring in natural and mathematical sciences. This lack of connection may be at least partially explained by the preponderance of technological and quantitative knowledge and skills expected to be demonstrated in the natural and mathematical sciences, as noted in IUB general education learning outcomes in those areas (IU, 2021b). Students DD and RV articulated what they understood as the differences between studying folklore and studying computer science or math; the ability to distinguish these comparisons, between the cultural knowledge of folklore and mathematical and scientific knowledge, actually comprises a course objective listed in Document 2 (reviewed September 22, 2019). Nevertheless, other student participants majoring in the

sciences or numbers-based disciplines, including Students EI, PX, and ZA, expressed value in the cultural knowledge they gained in their folklore general education classes, as a way of thinking that allowed them to supplement their scientific skills with more humane points of view. Such a perception by student participants intimates that natural and mathematical science majors, without exposure to cultural studies, may be stunted in their ability to live and work effectively in an 21st-century world that increasingly connects diverse cultures. This interpretation echoes scholars' voices featured in Chapter 2, notably Giroux and Giroux (2004), who counted lack of cultural learning among the perpetrators of neoliberalism, that "obliterates public concerns and cancels out the democratic impulses and practices of civil society by either devaluing or absorbing them within the logic of the market" (p. 72). While over half the student participants were able to pinpoint useful aspects of the cultural knowledge that they had gained towards pursuing their career goals, all 22 student participants noted at least one way in which they could connect the cultural learning they had gained from their folklore general education classes, to improving their observation and interaction with people and situations in daily life, in current study, and in future work environments.

In addition, every student participant described their folklore general education class as enjoyable, fun, or interesting. Over half of the students—Students AA, CC, CK, DD, DJ, NZ, OY, PX, QW, WW, YY, and ZA—hoped to go on to study foreign languages, to travel, or to study abroad, in order to increase their cultural knowledge and skills. Students AM, BB, EI, FH, GT, RV, and SU declared that they would seek out either another folklore class, or other types of classes for gaining cultural knowledge, in disciplines such as history, anthropology, art, linguistics, or human geography. At the time of our interview, Student SU was enrolled in a higher-level folklore class the next semester, to further explore one of the regional cultural areas

in which his folklore general education class had piqued his interest. Four of the student participants—Students BL, CC, WW, and ZZ—expressed serious consideration of incorporating folklore into their degree programs, either as a minor or as a double major. Student BY expected to gain more cultural knowledge by meeting people of different backgrounds, during his academic career at IUB. All of the student participants in this study, in reflecting upon their experiences in their fall 2019 folklore general education classes, seemed to value finding the classes, and future cultural experiences, interesting as much as, or possibly even as a requirement for, finding the classes useful to their lives.

Taking One Folklore Class: Nudging Students Towards Intercultural Maturity?

While student participants' responses seemed to provide answers to this study's main research questions, student narratives provided less clarity for my project's conceptual framework. Using narrative inquiry to analyze student participant narratives for indications of growth in intercultural maturity, I discovered the messy complexity spoken of by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in interpreting student reflections. Since two-thirds of the student participants identified as first-year college students, research by Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda (2015) allows me to surmise that these students most likely entered the fall 2019 semester at the initial phase of intercultural maturity, and therefore had plenty of room to grow. Nevertheless, my analysis uncovered "subjectivities" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17), voiced by the students, that demonstrate the possible lack of efficacy of one single folklore general education class to move all students to higher levels of the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive dimensions of intercultural maturity.

Positive and negative cases of interpersonal growth. According to Perez *et al.* (2015), students maturing interpersonally demonstrate transitions:

- Between initial and intermediate levels of maturity, students are found "[a]cknowledging cultural differences increasing and increasing one's willingness to interact across differences" (p. 771);
- Between intermediate and mature levels, students express increased awareness of privilege and "the need for greater mutuality in…relationships across difference…and the need for a more equitable society" (p. 772).

Students CK, FH, and OY, all upperclassmen, evinced growth towards a mature level of interpersonal intercultural maturity, as elaborated on in the theme of "Defining folk or social groups" in Chapter 4. Student CK allowed her newfound cultural knowledge from her folklore general education class to help her to recognize her positionality in her Spanish honors thesis research on memorials: "it really helped me realize…my standing as, like, a White, middle-class woman…from the US has really determined how I see different sites…both in the US and outside the US" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Her comments indicated a thoughtful rendering of how different social groups' cultural perspectives should be taken into consideration in creating, maintaining, and assessing public forms of commemoration. Despite emphasizing how "really, really different" (personal communication, January 30, 2020) Student FH found the Gullah Geechee people of South Carolina, of whom she learned in class, Student FH not only retained the information she had learned about this social group, but was also able to tie that learning to her Ebonics class, in which she heard more about the language of the Gullah people. Student FH expressed a willingness to have her assumptions challenged, to admit her privilege, and to seek ways to advocate for an end to "oppression, or whatever inequality is out there" (personal communication, January 30, 2020). Student OY pushed beyond his revulsion of one "tribal area" (personal communication, January 24, 2020) social group's practice of letting

their loved ones' bodies partially decompose before burial, to contemplate the American grief process that keeps death at "arm's length" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Student OY speculated that the American funeral industry could provide a healthier transition in the lives of mourners "by looking at other cultures and by examining how they handle and deal with death" (personal communication, January 24, 2020). Students CK, FH, and OY, in discussing their folklore general education classes, articulated having moved towards a desire not only to "interact across differences" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 771), but also to find mutual benefit in cross-cultural relationships.

In contrast, through the thematic analysis of Chapter 4, some student participants' comments intimated subconscious barriers in accepting cultural differences, in discussing their folklore general education classes. Student BY, while admitting to his educational socialization of viewing the world from a "modern American…superiority sort of complex" (personal communication, January 29, 2020), indicated some timidity in accepting differences that included religious beliefs, or even lack of the type of 'sophistication' to which he was accustomed. Student DJ did not rethink her statement about Native American traditions being less than "normal" (personal communication, January 27, 2020), displaying mental blinders to her own assumption that mainstream White American cultural practices are correct, and other American practices are illegitimate. Student GT, while connecting Cajun foodways traditions to her own South Asian American family's practices, still spoke of Cajun dishes as being more exotic, "wild" (personal communication, January 31, 2020), and therefore less appetizing than food from her mother's cultivated garden. Analysis of these student participants' statements suggests that one folklore general education class may not be enough to move students closer to a "willingness to interact across differences" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 771).

Positive and negative cases of intrapersonal growth. Students maturing in the intrapersonal dimension of intercultural maturity should transition to "recognizing the malleability of beliefs and identity" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 770). Students BB and EI articulated perceptions of cultural knowledge, related to their own identities, that indicated growth in this dimension, spurred on by their folklore general education classes. In "Defining folk or social groups" in Chapter 4, Student BB seemed delighted to learn more about herself through discovering that the social groups to which she belonged affected how she interacted with the world: "how I think and how I feel, how I believe" (personal communication, February 4, 2020). Even more, Student BB was willing to admit that her folklore general education class took her out of the center of her own little world, and into something bigger:

> [I]t almost makes me feel like I'm a little dumber than I was, when I first started…I didn't know that all of these things existed, and so, once they taught it, and I learned about it, I was, like, Oh, wow, like, there's a lot out there that I still have to learn, or that I can learn about. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

Student BB indicated a readiness to grow, after taking a folklore general education class. In the theme "Discovering the power of stories," Student EI confessed her complicity in the systemic "patriarchy" (personal communication, January 28, 2020) that included spreading degrading rumors about young women in high school. Student EI expressed a sense of responsibility in "being an American" (personal communication, January 28, 2020), and the type of professional, willing and able to work across cultural boundaries—including awareness of the boundaries within her own social group.

Other students exhibited some lack of awareness of their own social groups, even upon taking a folklore general education class. For example, as noted in the Chapter 4 theme of

"Defining folk or social groups," Student ZA was still of the opinion that she had no culture, except for being Catholic. After one folklore general education class, she had yet to grasp that social group influence is broader than religious or ethnic affiliation. As mentioned in the Chapter 4 theme of "Applying cultural learning to own daily life and goals, Student AA, in pondering how to use "subliminal messages" to combat racist attitudes, originally spoke as though only older people, such as a relative of hers, could be racist, as "a product of her time" (personal communication, February 3, 2020). In her next breath, Student AA mentioned "people just in my hometown" (personal communication, February 3, 2020) also needing changed minds, causing me to question whether the student believed that racist attitudes are truly restricted by age. Student AA went on to say: "there's still a lot of people who are, you know, unrepentant racists, but there's fewer of them" (personal communication, February 3, 2020). While Student AA displayed an egalitarian attitude, her assumptions betrayed a need for more cultural learning of her own White context. Notwithstanding the experience of a folklore general education class, both Students AA and ZA maintained blind spots regarding the White American cultural milieu in which they live.

Positive and negative cases of cognitive growth. According to Perez *et al.* (2015), students growing in the cognitive domain of intercultural maturity not only demonstrate a better understanding of how knowledge is constructed, but also may experience a transitional phase of confusion over the complexity of "multiple cultural perspectives" (p. 769). As I elaborated in the theme "Discovering the power of stories" in Chapter 4, Student DD jumped wholeheartedly into her own independent theory-building project, after watching a documentary on different cultural perspectives of sleep paralysis imagery. Not only did Student DD do more research on the three cultural groups featured in the documentary, but she even used herself as a subject of analysis, to

test her hypothesis on the image of the sleep paralysis 'demon' differing according to the paralyzed sleeper's sociocultural anxieties and fears. Student DD ended the interview expressing a desire to have a more "holistic approach" (personal communication, February 14, 2020) to viewing the world around her.

In contrast, as revealed under the same theme in Chapter 4, Student RV expressed frustration in what she found as "so much unsureness in all of folklore" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). She complained about the readings—"the readings didn't…give you the answer right away…confused me more than…helped me understand what everything was"—and considered research on the origins of oral urban legends to be "nearly impossible" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Though Student RV admitted that "some things…stuck" with her, she insisted that she didn't "understand anything" the instructor said and that the class "didn't really…change [her] view of any cultures" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Though she claimed to consider "taking more folklore classes," her Education program most likely will prove too inflexible. Student RV seemed to dismiss the experience of her folklore general education class by stating that she planned to seek a math teaching job in a "small town," intimating an all-White town with "small-town homey vibes" (personal communication, January 28, 2020). Not only do I view Student RV as being mired in the confusion over the complexity of "multiple cultural perspectives" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 769), but I fear she may not avail herself of the chance to wrestle with that complexity—and she may be in for a rude awakening among the social groups she encounters in the town of her first professional teaching experience.

The conceptual framework of intercultural maturity, coupled with the qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry, allowed me to analyze student participants' reflections more

deeply. I was able to note the disparities among students' capacities to construct new knowledge for themselves "from personal experience, evidence from other sources, and others' experiences" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 276). From my analysis, I acknowledge that students' perceptions of a single folklore general education class may not be enough to determine their growth in cultural knowledge and skills. More research across students' academic careers is needed, in order to uncover the factors that contribute to students' intercultural maturity development.

My understanding of the need for longitudinal study of undergraduate students' intercultural maturity development is corroborated by a recent study by Perez and Shim (2020, in which the researchers empirically investigated King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) theory. Using data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS), including multiple interviews with dozens of students, Perez and Shim (2020) conducted a four-year study of how time factors into intercultural maturity models, as

> individuals shift from viewing socially constructed identities and cultures as monolithic and characterizing others' perspectives as strange or wrong to holding nuanced views of and appreciation for other cultures. (p. 408)

These researchers found that students who indicated the most intercultural maturity development included:

- students who sought immersion experiences, "that put them in sustained contact with people across cultural differences" (p. 414), forcing them "to engage in reflection during and after those immersion experiences" (p. 414);
- students who "tended to have multiple experiences exploring one dimension of socially constructed identity," whether that be race, gender, religion, or other identities.

Nevertheless, my study appears to illustrate work conducted in 2013 by King, Perez, and Shim, referred to by Perez and Shim (2020), using WNS data to see what settings allowed students to gain any kind of intercultural learning. In that earlier study, the researchers indicated that intercultural learning approaches had "varying degrees of complexity and agency that ranged from simply listening and watching to deeply empathizing with others" (Perez & Shim, 2020, p. 408). From the comments of student participants in my study, I understand that a single folklore general education class provided those students not only with plenty of listening and watching, but also with reading, research, and discussion—and our interview conversations added some reflection. At the very least, I believe my study, as a whole, has helped to amplify the voices of undergraduate students in the wider scholarly context of folklore education, cultural knowledge teaching and learning, general education learning outcomes, and the value of the liberal arts in an undergraduate education.

Implications of Study and Recommendations for Further Research and Action

The findings of this study provide a window into the perception of undergraduate students of the cultural knowledge and skills gained from folklore general education classes, as well as the benefits from gaining such knowledge and skills. In meeting the purpose of this study as outlined in Chapter 1, these findings offer student participants' voices to higher education research in several ways:

- Answering the challenge of folklore education researchers (Dolby, 1996; Gabbert, 2010; Hirschi, 2001) for a full-fledged undergraduate folklore degree program to record some investigation of the learning experiences of their students;
- Framing folklore general education learning outcomes as an example of cultural knowledge teaching and learning, leading undergraduate students towards intercultural

maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015) and intercultural and multicultural competence (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004);

- Demonstrating some of the intended purposes of 21st-century undergraduate general education programs;
- Illuminating some of the arguments for the value of the liberal arts in an undergraduate education.

In addressing the placement of this project within the current higher education literature, I will also provide some recommendations for further research, as well as courses of action suggested by the results of this study.

Expanding Undergraduate Folklore Education Research

The findings of my study not only expand on the work of Hirschi (2001) and Gabbert (2010) in uncovering the perceptions of undergraduate students of some of the knowledge and skills gained in studying folklore, but also took part in the IU Folklore Department's initiative to assess undergraduate learning in introductory classes (Dolby, 1996). While Hirschi (2001) investigated student essays on one English composition class's oral family narrative project, my study offered students in several folklore general education classes a conversation, allowing them to reflect over a range of topics, projects, and concepts to which they had been introduced in their folklore general education classes, in the course of a semester. While some student participants indicated having been exposed to practicing skills such as "communication, diversity, and independent inquiry…skills employers want from our graduates" (Hirschi, 2001, p. 26), others complained of wanting more than just a broad introduction to cultural practices. While some student participants in my study articulated discovering connections with social

groups different from their own backgrounds and with their own identities, most expressed at least a partial understanding of how they might use cultural knowledge to interact in society. To varying degrees, the 22 student participants in my study described the type of meaning-making that Hirschi (2001) considered central to the study of folklore: "folklore is relevant to the private and occupational lives we lead" (p. 18).

This present study represents a preliminary answer to Gabbert's (2010) challenge to the few American higher education institutions housing undergraduate folklore degree programs, to assess the "outcomes of undergraduates' folklore research" (p. 41) in influencing the rest of their undergraduate experiences as well as their career goals. Gabbert's focus was on her design of a course plan leading to a culminating research project, for her Intro to Folklore class at Utah State University. Since her own report lacked an assessment of her students' learning outcomes, Gabbert seemed to intimate that full-fledged undergraduate degree programs should initiate longitudinal investigations of the effects on their major students of the study of folklore, both through undergraduate experiences as on post-baccalaureate careers. Not only would such a study require a lot of time, correspondence, coordination, and planning, but the confounding variables of other major and minor courses of study, curricular and co-curricular activities, and intervening life experiences would undoubtedly muddle the findings of this type of study. The results of my study begin to shade in a picture of how first-time students of folklore general education classes—classes akin to Gabbert's introductory class—perceive the contribution of the study of folklore to their cultural knowledge learning. These findings illuminate some of the effects of classes like Gabbert's on the types of students—"usually freshmen or sophomores" (Gabbert, 2010, p. 37)—who enroll in folklore general education classes.

My study, in examining course syllabi, class observation notes, and especially the data from 22 semi-structured interviews, provides deeper and more multidimensional findings than could emerge from departmental survey data. At the very least, my study coincides with the 40th anniversary of the IU Folklore BA program (IU Folklore Institute [ca. 1972]), not only commemorating a historic event in undergraduate folklore education, but also representing the vanguard of a new decade of research in undergraduate folklore education learning outcomes, incorporating the voices of undergraduate folklore students.

Providing a Case Study of Cultural Knowledge Development

This present study demonstrates how folklore general education learning outcomes can be framed as an example of cultural knowledge teaching and learning that can lead students towards intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015) and intercultural and multicultural competence (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). As has been forcefully and poignantly substantiated in the ongoing worldwide health crisis of the coronavirus pandemic, 21st-century society is intricately and intimately connected, and educating undergraduate students in the cultural values and practices of different social groups—including their own social groups—is vital and relevant, in preparing students not only to interact sensibly and empathetically with other people, but also to recognize and value worldviews and customs that could herald a healthier future for humankind. In using King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) intercultural maturity model as a conceptual framework for my study, I sought to explore how the perceptions of folklore general education students represented intercultural maturity development along the three dimensions of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal understanding. My investigation of these dimensions through my study indicated that one folklore general education class is not enough to move many students

very far towards accepting their place in "multiple realities" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 584) or towards the intermediate stage of intercultural maturity in developing their own self-definitions. According to student participants' comments about the education they received in their folklore general education classes, instructors of these classes seemed to have provided lessons geared towards, at the very least, propelling students' intrapersonal growth, with "opportunities to explore identity as socially constructed and to consider the interactions of social identities" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 774). Student participants mentioned projects such as examining their childhood Halloween costume choices, interviewing members of their own social groups about urban legend variations, and class presentations on their own family traditions. Since many students taking folklore general education classes are in their first or second year of college, perhaps instructors of folklore classes beyond the general education level provide more "scaffolding" and "support" to understand the "multiple cultural perspectives" and "social structures and power differentials" (Perez *et al.*, 2015, p. 774) required for growth in the cognitive and interpersonal dimensions of intercultural maturity. Future research could include discovering how students choose to expand their cultural knowledge and skills beyond their folklore general education classes.

As my study proved enlightening regarding students' perceptions of cultural knowledge gains through folklore general education classes, but only spotty or inconclusive regarding intercultural maturity development, my study does not quite match up with the findings of Marx and Moss (2011) or Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004). While the purposive sample of study somewhat resembles that of Marx and Moss's (2011) population of pre-service teachers—predominantly White and female—their study of the effects of cultural immersion student teaching programs seemed more conclusive in demonstrating the value of such programs in

helping the students develop an understanding of self and others. Nevertheless, my study did corroborate the usefulness of helping students engage in "critical cultural reflection" (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 36), which is also referred to in Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's (2004) study of multicultural competence training for student affairs professionals. Pope *et al.* (2004) insisted that self-reflection—as well as reading about and meeting different kinds of people, and intentional engagement in cultural knowledge learning—are critical in helping students to grow in understanding and appreciating "the multidimensionality of identity and how all individuals are influenced by membership and experiences in a variety of cultural groups" (p. 23). My study provided student participants a chance to reflect on some of the ways in which their folklore general education classes not only enriched their sense of self and understanding of social group membership, but also challenged them to recognize some of the social anxieties that influenced their own words and actions—purported goals of folklore educators (Green, 1984; Hirschi, 2001; Stekert, 1984). The findings of this present study suggest that students may move more definitively towards intercultural awareness, competence, and growth when provided the opportunity to reflect on the cultural knowledge lessons to which they have been exposed.

Demonstrating 21st-Century General Education Goals

The findings of this present study amplify the voices of students in the ongoing discussion of the purposes of undergraduate general education. Researchers such as Glynn, Aultman, and Owens (2005), Hall, Culver, and Burge (2012), and Miller and Sundre (2008) worked with student survey data, aggregating student opinions towards general education courses as mostly negative and irrelevant to their daily lives. These same researchers recommended improving student attitudes by helping students to connect general education knowledge to their majors and personal goals. Hopkins's three-year research project at Boise

State University indicated that discussing with students how general education courses made a difference in their lives, improved students' attitudes towards general education courses in general (McMurtrie, 2019). Student participants' reflections in my study illustrate both of these researchers' recommendations:

1. Student participants were able to connect the cultural knowledge learning from their folklore general education classes to their majors, anticipated careers, and/or personal goals.
2. Within discussion during semi-structured interviews, student participants were able to articulate how the cultural knowledge learning from their folklore general education made a difference in their lives.

Future research would need to be conducted to discover whether or not such reflection improved students' attitudes towards general education courses in general.

Student participants' comments also indicate that the study of folklore seems to be effective for meeting 21st-century general education learning outcomes. Findings of my study represented students learning about different cultures, reflecting the first essential learning outcome of the LEAP plan, "Knowledge of human cultures" (AAC&U, 2007). Even more cogently, student participants' reflections, on the cultural knowledge they perceived gaining from their folklore general education classes, denote movement towards key learning outcome measures of the IUB general education plan. For example, in regards to the Social and Historical Studies (S&H) Breadth of Inquiry, student participants described gaining awareness of their own roles and influences in social situations, reflecting the disciplinary category's third key measure:

3. Personal and Social Responsibility
    a. Intercultural knowledge…. (IU, 2009, p. 8)

In the study of folklore—the cultural and artistic expression of groups of people in everyday life—student participants expressed having made gains in cultural knowledge learning outcomes related to the IUB Arts and Humanities (A&H) Breadth of Inquiry key measures:

1. "*Knowledge* of origins, varieties, and meanings of the expressions and artifacts of human expression" (IU, 2009, p. 7).
4. "*Ability to development arguments, ideas, and opinions* about forms of human expression" (IU, 2009, p. 8).
6. "*Ability to explain and assess the changing perspectives* on the meanings of arts and humanities traditions, and to explore one's own identity within prior and current intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural frameworks" (IU, 2009, p. 8).

To varying degrees, student participants' perceptions of their cultural knowledge gains from folklore general education classes particularly align with the World Language and Cultures learning outcomes of the IUB general education plan, particularly in the learning outcomes related to cultural knowledge:

Knowledge

1. Understanding culture within a global and comparative context (that is, the student recognizes that his/her culture is one of many diverse cultures and that alternate perceptions and behaviors may be based on cultural differences).
3. Demonstrates knowledge of other cultures (including beliefs, values, perspectives, practices, and products).

Skills:

4. Uses knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternate perspectives to think critically and solve problems.

Attitudes:

8. Accepts cultural differences and tolerates cultural ambiguity.

9. Demonstrates an ongoing willingness to seek out international or intercultural opportunities. (IU, 2009, pp. 8-9)

The findings of my study offer the voices of students in investigating the utility of folklore as a discipline that affords students general education learning outcomes for living and working in a dynamic and intricately connected 21st-century world.

Supporting the Value of an Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education

Student participants' stories in this present study suggest that students may perceive the value of a liberal arts education to transcend quantifiable terms. While the philosophy of neoliberalism has imbued most American societal systems, including higher education, with the view that economic value prevails above all other kinds of worth (Brown, 2015; Lea, 2014), the student participants in my study pondered aspects of the cultural knowledge they gained, from their folklore general education classes, in terms that rarely touched on economic benefits. Instead, student participants' comments echoed some of the arguments of scholarly champions of the liberal arts. For example, several student participants acknowledged improvement in what Nussbaum (2010) referred to as "the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person" (p. 7). At least one student insisted that her newfound learning mattered in attaining to what Hartman (2017) referred to as "what it means to be an American" (p. 139). Most compellingly, student participants in my study expressed a new cultural awareness that Giroux and Giroux (2004) attributed to the purpose of cultural studies education, of which the study of folklore may be exemplary:

> [Cultural studies are] not about constructing a linear narrative, but about blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, acknowledging the manner of its transmission, and recapturing its concern with human suffering, struggles, values, and the legacy of the often unrepresented or misrepresented. (p. 105)

I submit, through the results of my study, that giving undergraduate students space to verbally reflect on their cultural knowledge learning, thoughtfully analyzing their ruminations, and supplying the findings to higher education decision makers at all levels would amplify the voices of students—those recipients of today's higher education who will be tomorrow's community, institutional, and world leaders—in the ongoing debate of what best constitutes an American undergraduate education.

Recommendations for Further Research and Action

Given the lack of literature in higher education scholarship featuring student voices articulating actual learning outcomes from culture studies, humanities, or social sciences—particularly at the undergraduate general education level—I have several suggestions for broadening the methods and results of this present study.

Within the IUB Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology (FOLK/ETHNO), the setting of my study, I think that more coordinated and systematic assessment of FOLK/ETHNO student learning outcomes would provide the department not only with ideas for enhancing curriculum, but also with a more powerful portfolio for approaching the university with requests for resources. To combat the limitations of my study—a purposive sample of self-selected students, overrepresenting students who had relatively positive experiences in larger general education classes—department instructors could offer an extra-credit reflective essay on learning outcomes to students in all undergraduate FOLK/ETHNO classes. Considering the diminutive

size of the department's undergraduate major program, the frequent filling of the FOLK/ETHNO department's undergraduate classes, from general education through advanced levels, denotes the attraction of a sizeable number of non-FOLK/ETHNO majors to all FOLK/ETHNO classes. Providing the reflection as an extra-credit option might garner a population of respondents with a wider variety of FOLK/ETHNO class experiences and opinions. Extra credit, as opposed to being a required assignment, might also decrease the propensity for students to respond with comments they think the instructor would like to hear. If these efforts are already underway, but not made public in university archives, again, a more coordinated and systematic endeavor to bring these to light could be beneficial to the department. As video has become a more common medium for submitting assignments as well as for providing instruction, FOLK/ETHNO instructors might assign the extra-credit reflection essay as a video assignment. Not only would a video assignment mitigate what Hirschi (2001) considered shallow essays due to lack of "exposure to a wider base of student writing" (p. 133), but might also provide more candid musings, akin to the semi-structured interviews of my study. Regularly offering such an extra-credit assignment, in all FOLK/ETHNO classes, could accrue a unique collection of student perceptions of course learning outcomes over time.

Another variation on my study could involve semi-annual, semi-structured focus groups of FOLK/ETHNO majors. Next to ascertaining general education learning outcomes, FOLK/ETHNO department faculty would benefit from gaining a greater understanding of the undergraduate major experience within the department. The department could gather groups of FOLK/ETHNO majors, once a semester, to discuss not only their FOLK/ETHNO class learning outcomes, but also the students' perceptions of the connections among their curricular and co-curricular activities, and their FOLK/ETHNO major to their daily lives and career goals.

Analysis of recorded focus groups could allow for some semblance of answering Gabbert's (2010) call for established folklore undergraduate degree programs to track "outcomes of undergraduates' folklore research" (p. 41), at least throughout their undergraduate academic careers.

Beyond the IUB Department of FOLK/ETHNO, I recommend my study's approach—document analysis of general education class syllabi, class observations, and semi-structured interviews of novice students—as one that other educators can use, in order to better ascertain student learning outcomes in general education courses, particularly in the humanities and the social sciences. For example, educators in area studies, such as Latino Studies, African American Studies, and Gender Studies, could use an interview protocol similar to mine, in order to gather information on students' perceptions of cultural knowledge learning outcomes. Researchers in broader disciplines, such as history or English or political science, should determine the general education learning outcomes they are most interested in uncovering, and designing research inquiries to capture student perceptions of acquiring the most salient general education learning goals for the discipline in question. As has been noted in the implications of this present study, for filling gaps in current higher education literature, educators in the humanities and the social sciences would do well to amplify the voices of student in the argument for the noncommercial benefits of these fields in an undergraduate education. Considering that many non-science majors are required to take natural and mathematical science general education courses—often with dread—educators in those fields would also do well to help students reflect on the knowledge and skills gained from natural and mathematical science general education courses. As Hopkins discovered at Boise State (McMurtrie, 2019), the more students are able to connect general

education courses to their own personal goals and major programs, the more student opinions will grow, in a positive direction, towards institutional general education programs overall.

Conclusion

The purpose of my study has been to present folklore as a case study in allowing students to articulate their perceptions of cultural knowledge learning outcomes. The student participants' stories add clarity to the existing literature of the benefits of gaining cultural knowledge and understanding through studying folklore in undergraduate general education. The findings of this study also amplify student reflections and opinions within the discussions surrounding the purpose of undergraduate general education. The methodology of my study could be adapted to future inquiries in other humanities and social science disciplines. I offer this study not only as an effort to gain understanding of how students perceive folklore general education classes as contributing to their cultural knowledge and skills, but also as an example of how to acquire student reflections in ways that both illuminate students' minds to what they have learned, as well as reinvigorate the mission of the liberal arts in an undergraduate education.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

Introduction of interview protocol, from me to student:

Thank you for coming. Even though this interview is simply a conversation between you and me, as a research participant I ask you to please look over this consent form, and sign it if you are willing to continue our conversation.

[After consent form signed] I appreciate your participation! In this interview, I am interested in hearing about your experiences in FOLK-F [course number] [course title]. Throughout this interview, when I mention "this class" or "this course," I will be referring to FOLK-F [course number] [course title]. As I mentioned before, this is just a conversation between us, and will NOT initiate any feedback to your instructor.

Warm-up questions:

Tell me about how you chose to come to IU.

What are you currently thinking about in relation to your career goals? Why?

1. **First topic domain**: Initial student perceptions of cultural knowledge gained through folklore general education class
    a. Lead-off question
        i. Tell me about your decision to enroll in this class.
        ii. What perceptions did you have about the course or topic, before you enrolled?
    b. Follow-up questions
        i. Did anyone talk to you about the course, before you enrolled? Who was that person?

ii. What did they say about the course?

iii. Tell me about a time in which something in the course surprised you.

2. **Second topic domain**: Gaining interpersonal knowledge from folklore general education class

    a. Lead-off question, with probes

        i. Describe a culture or social group that was new to you, that you remember studying or discussing in this class.

            1. What kinds of stories about that group of people did you learn about in class?

            2. What kinds of artifacts did you look at or listen to, pertaining to that group of people?

    b. Follow-up questions

        i. Tell me about an assignment or assessment that you had in this class, that helped you to explore this group's worldview?

        ii. Did you have any assumptions confirmed or challenged, by these stories, artifacts, or assignments? Tell me about that.

        iii. How do you see that culture or social group in relation to your own social group?

3. **Third topic domain**: Gaining intrapersonal knowledge from folklore general education class

    a. Lead-off question

        i. Describe a class activity or assignment you remember, that caused you to reflect on your own experiences.

b. Follow-up questions

i. Tell me about how that particular class experience caused you to reflect on your own experience.

ii. Did this activity cause you to think differently from how you thought before, about your own social group?

1. [If "yes"] Tell me more about that.

2. [If "no"] Tell me more about how this activity confirmed your thoughts.

4. **Fourth topic domain**: Gaining cognitive development towards intercultural maturity through this folklore general education class

a. Lead-off question

i. What is an idea, or concept, or theory that you learned in this class, that you can use to understand cultures of social groups?

b. Follow-up questions

i. When you got this new information, what did you think?

ii. Give me an example of a class activity or assignment that helped you to explore and make sense of this new idea you learned.

iii. Tell me more about how this concept has shaped your thinking about the cultures of social groups.

iv. How might you explain this idea you learned to your friends or family members, if they asked you to tell them something you learned in this class?

5. **Fifth topic domain**: Relating cultural learning in folklore general education class to major area of study, and to future plans
    a. Lead-off questions
        i. Do you see any connections between what you learned in this class to your major?
            1. [If "yes"] Tell me about those connections.
                a. How might cultural knowledge or skills pertain to what you said?
            2. [If "no"] Tell me about the disconnects.
        ii. Do you see any connections between what you learned in this class to your career plans?
            1. [If "yes"] Tell me about those connections.
                a. How might cultural knowledge or skills pertain to what you said?
            2. [If "no"] Tell me about the disconnects.
    b. Follow-up questions
        i. How do you think about your cultural knowledge, in relation to this folklore class?
        ii. Would you pursue any other experiences, to expand your cultural knowledge and skills?
            1. [If "yes"] Tell me what those experiences might be.
            2. [If "no"] Tell me more about your decision.

Categories I intend to explore in each domain:

First topic domain: Initial student perceptions about cultural knowledge gained through folklore general education class

1. Requirements student expected to fulfill, in taking class
2. Why student chose this particular class to fulfill requirements, over other choices
3. Student's initial orientation to cultural knowledge learning

Second topic domain: Gaining interpersonal knowledge from folklore general education class

1. Whether the student found and retained any cultural knowledge of cultures different from their own
2. Whether the student gained any interpersonal understanding from the class

Third topic domain: Gaining intrapersonal knowledge from folklore general education class

1. Whether the student found any activity or assignment memorable about the class, regarding self-reflection
2. Any intrapersonal understanding student may have gained

Fourth topic domain: Gaining cognitive development towards intercultural maturity through this folklore general education class

1. Whether student has gained any ability to construct knowledge by sorting through multiple perspectives
2. Whether student can articulate knowledge gained, to others who lack exposure to this particular type of cultural education

Fifth topic domain: Relating cultural learning in folklore general education class to major area of study, and to future plans

1. Whether or not student has gained any insight into connection between cultural knowledge gained in folklore general education class and major/minor programs
2. Whether student has been inspired to seek more cultural knowledge and skills

KRYSTIE L. HERNDON

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education, Higher Education — May 2021
Indiana University School of Education — Bloomington, IN
Minor: Folklore, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology

Master of Science, Higher Education — May 2012
Indiana University School of Education — Bloomington, IN

Master of Library Science — December 2006
Indiana University School of Library and Information Science — Bloomington, IN

Bachelor of Arts — May 1984
Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College) — Westminster, MD
Majors: English, Spanish
Certificate: American Sign Language Interpretation

PUBLICATIONS

- Herndon, K. (2015, May 13). The importance of advising in the humanities. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/

PRESENTATIONS

- Concurrent session, NACADA 2020 Virtual Annual Conference — October 6, 2020
  - Telling the Full Story of Advising: The Advising Contributions Tool — online
- Breakout session, EDGE Conference — May 27, 2020
  - **G**et **En**gag**ed**! How Advisors Can Help Re-Brand General Education Options for Students — online
- Admissions Red Carpet Days and information sessions—recruiting prospective College of Arts and Sciences students — 2016-Present
- Pre-advising workshops for College Direct Admit Scholars — 2015-2019
- Breakout session, BAAC Spring Conference — February 27, 2017
  - "Giving Students a Place for Alma Mater: Advisors and the Spirit of Place on College and University Campuses" — Bloomington, IN
- Poster presentation, NACADA Region V Conference — April 10, 2015
  - "Oh, the Humanity! Why Advising in the Humanities is a Good Thing" — Bloomington, IN
- Breakout session, BAAC Spring Conference — February 24, 2014
  - "'So Much to Do, So Little Time': Taking the Time to Take Care of Yourself" — Bloomington, IN

- Breakout session, BAAC Spring Conference — February 25, 2013
  - "Transfer Students and Student Engagement: The Case of a Small Department" — Bloomington, IN

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

College of Arts and Sciences Academic Advising, Indiana University — May 2017-Present
Senior Advisor — Bloomington, IN

- Advise undergraduate students pursuing bachelor's degrees in the departments of Art History, Criminal Justice, Linguistics, and Folklore & Ethnomusicology
- Design and co-teach career readiness class to arts and humanities students
- Promote departmental academic and co-curricular offerings to students, parents, and university officials
- Facilitate and support Folklore & Ethnomusicology Student Association
- Mentor current and prospective advising colleagues
- Represent the College of Arts and Sciences in campus-wide recruiting and retention initiatives

Academic Advisor — August 2007-May 2017
Bloomington, IN

- Advised undergraduate students pursuing bachelor's degrees in the departments of Art History, Criminal Justice, Linguistics, and Folklore & Ethnomusicology
- Promoted departmental academic and co-curricular offerings to students, parents, and university officials
- Facilitated and supported fledgling undergraduate student associations in departments of Linguistics and of Folklore & Ethnomusicology
- Mentored current and prospective advising colleagues
- Represented the College of Arts and Sciences in campus-wide recruiting and retention initiatives

College of Arts and Sciences Recorder's Office, Indiana University — May 2001-August 2007
Transfer Recorder — Bloomington, IN

- Managed files for new external and intercampus transfer students into the College
- Coordinated seasonal orientation programs for new transfer students into the College
- Tracked and computed students' progress towards graduation within the College
- Served students, academic advisors, and other university personnel in person and by phone

International Admissions, Indiana University — September 1995-May 2001
Admissions Representative — Bloomington, IN

- Fielded an average of 50-100 daily inquiries regarding international admissions, via phone and electronic mail, from prospective students as well as from campus departments

- Created, produced, and disbursed office correspondence including admission decision letters and federal visa documentation

Indiana University School of Law (now Maurer School of Law) August 1990-September 1995
Faculty Secretary Bloomington, IN

- Obtained copyright permission and prepared class syllabi and materials
- Generated written correspondence for ten full-time faculty

Chicano-Riqueño Studies Office, Indiana University May 1987-May 1989
Secretary Bloomington, IN

- Managed office, including faculty's personal office library
- Typed, proofread, and wrote for two departmental literary journals

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Excellence in Service to Students Award, May 2013
National Society of Leadership and Success

Professional Staff Merit Award, Indiana University December 2011

College Advisor of the Year, Indiana University May 2009

Nominee, Terri Nation Outstanding Advisor Award, February 2009, February 2015
Bloomington Academic Advising Council

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- NACADA-The Global Community for Academic Advising 2008-Present
- Bloomington Academic Advising Council (BAAC) 2007-Present
  - Steering Committee May 2009-May 2011

CAMPUS SERVICE ACTIVITIES

- College Academic Advising Transfer Students Working Group Fall 2020-present
- IUB Advising Professional Contributions Committee Fall 2017-Spring 2018
- College Academic Advising Awards and Recognition Working Group Spring 2017-Spring 2018
- College 21st-Century Task Force-Curriculum Reorganization Subcommittee Spring 2015
- IUB Advising Metrics Task Force Fall 2014-Spring 2015